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WHILE Communist propaganda is being skilfully directed towards winning sympathy in various disguises and on many pretexts, whether sentimental or cultural, there is urgent need for a clear exposure of its fundamentally anti-religious aims. Père de Bivort de la Saudée has made a very thorough study of the whole subject in relation to many countries, and he has produced a most important and arresting survey in this book. He relies on facts, not rhetoric, and shows beyond all dispute how inseparably the Communist doctrine and programme are committed to a militant destruction of all religion.



## COMMUNISM AND ANTI-RELIGION



# COMMUNISM AND ANTI-RELIGION (1917—1937)

By  
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*With a Preface by*  
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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

SOME of the sources quoted in this book—notably the official International Correspondence of the Comintern—are obtainable in English, but, except where otherwise stated, the references here are to the French edition.

The initials of various Communist organizations are taken from their French titles, which are used generally except in the case of the Proletarian Freethinkers' International, where the initials I.L.P. might cause confusion with a political body in this country.

I have retained the offensive word 'ideology' in the translation as being currently used and generally understood.

R. J. D.





## PREFACE

OF all the dangers which threaten our civilization, the most serious are those which spring from the general disorder in ideas and morals. Careless and superficial people may be disposed to deny or to minimize this danger, which has increased rapidly since the Great War, but those who see what is happening and have taken the trouble to reflect upon it, are rightly alarmed at the rising tide of barbarism around us.

While the various countries dissipate their energies in economic and political rivalry, they are threatened by the invasion and infiltration of a subtle poison. Under various names and aspects, an extremely disquieting campaign is being organized against them which aims at their conquest, if not by material force, at least by a zealous and corrupting propaganda.

We are not concerned here with one of those great political or philosophical movements which have occurred from time to time during the Christian era, such as Feudalism, the rise of the communes, the Renaissance or the French revolution. With all their weaknesses and errors, these movements were at least inspired by the desire to build up an ordered society guided by rational conceptions and aiming at the progress of institutions and laws. No such intellectual or spiritual element mitigates the danger in this great ferment in our own days of which Bolshevism is the 'septic focus.' If we seek for its doctrine, we find nothing but a contagion of negative and destructive

ideas with no ideal which has anything to offer in the sphere of social relations, in science or in art.

The first aim which the promoters of this furious offensive have set themselves, is the liquidation of the supernatural. Far from denying this, they admit it with a frankness which is the only merit we are able to concede them. Their object is to uproot our civilization from the Christian soil from which it draws its sap, and to overthrow religion which is the only effective dam against the tide of passion and selfishness. Thus material forces would be set free to carry away all the principles and instincts of order, gradation, and moral discipline.

It might have been expected that in face of so grave a danger the nations which embody our civilization and reap its advantages would be united by a common instinct of self-preservation, but in actual fact we find the evil aggravated by the open or tacit complicity which it receives in all the threatened countries. This complicity is found not only among the ignorant and semi-educated who might be expected to be an easy prey, but in what we ought to be able to regard as educated and cultivated circles. Aided by the most up-to-date methods of publicity, this propaganda makes headway all the more easily in nations which have remained faithful to the liberal principles of the nineteenth century, in the measure of their very fidelity to those principles.

It is principally in the democratic countries that this plague has to be fought, not by fear nor by force, but by ideas, opposing truth to falsehood. That has been the aim of the able author of this authoritative book, whose object and plan are very well described in his title *Communism and Anti-Religion (1917-1937)*.

I have read a great many publications, appearing in France and elsewhere, which aim at throwing light on the reality and seriousness of the Communist peril,

but I know of none which is so rich and sound in its information. This is a book of philosophy and of history, written with a good faith which declines to score mere debating points and must impress all impartial readers by the precision of its evidence and the clarity with which it is presented. I do not see how it can fail to open the eyes even of the indifferent and prejudiced.

To-day, as always, the religious question lies at the root of social and individual existence. 'Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it,' because no human society, whatever its character, will devote itself with any constancy to the service of right if right represents for it merely a vague something without cause and with no sanctions.

Failing a higher principle of justice and authority, any society will be inevitably given over to the play of individual appetites. Scientific progress cannot prevent this. On the contrary, the progress of discovery and invention by placing ever new knowledge and more numerous distractions before us, will demand an increasingly firm discipline, a higher morality and, to adapt a famous phrase, 'more soul.'

What will happen to civilization if, little by little, it destroys the platform on which it is built? Experience of the world and of life led Maurice Barrès to the conclusion that what our disillusioned youth needs is God at its side. It would be truer to say that the man of the twentieth century needs God in his heart.

H. CARTON DE WIART.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

PART of this book has already appeared in the form of articles, principally in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. One portion, and not the least important, formed part of the *Essai d'une Somme Catholique contre les sans-Dieu*,<sup>1</sup> while other passages have been given as lectures. It was the reception of these publications and addresses, as well as various conversations, which led us to feel that it would be worth while to bring the scattered fragments together in a form more easily accessible to the public.

There exist to-day in the most varied social circles an *élite* which desires to know more about Communism and to work for victory of religion over this anti-religion of our times. The publication of these few chapters, which do not amount altogether to more than an essay, will not have been in vain if it is able to throw some light on the subject for them. It is only by a fuller understanding of the nature of the evil that the civilized world can be led to a better appreciation of the need to deal with it and to rebuild the commonwealth in closer conformity with the social doctrine of the Church, which is still too much misunderstood in our day.

With few alterations, this English edition is a direct translation of the French, which issued from the press on March 19, 1937, the very day on which Pope Pius XI published the Encyclical 'Divini Redemptoris.' Apart from one or two quotations, I

<sup>1</sup> Paris, Editions Spes, 1936.

have not thought it necessary to refer to this Encyclical on atheistic Communism, for it is virtually contained in the numerous pontifical documents which preceded it, of which we have made considerable use. The same may be said of the joint letter of the Spanish Bishops published in August, 1937. Little reference to it will be found in this new edition, because the conclusion left by the reading of this important document is substantially that which the reader will have formed from the chapter on 'Spain in 1936.'

*September, 1937.*

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## PART ONE

### FIRST PRINCIPLES—ADVENT AND EARLY DEVELOPMENTS OF THE COMMUNIST ANTI- RELIGION (1917-1935)

" Communists proclaim openly that their ends can be attained only by the violent overthrow of the whole traditional social order." (Programme of the Communist International.)



## CHAPTER I

### COMMUNISM AND CATHOLICISM

Definition of Soviet Communism—Radical opposition of Communism and Catholicism : in Principle—Individual, family, social, and international life—The end and the means of attaining it—Condemnation of Communism.

' Religion and Communism are incompatible alike in theory and in practice.'

(*A.B.C. of Communism*, p. 246.)

**M**ARXIAN atheism is an integral part of Soviet Communism, of which it is the essential condition and the inescapable development. Hence, before we can discuss the origins of the atheism of Moscow, its development and spread in the world and particularly in France and Spain to-day, something must be said about Communism. This atheistic cult, in spite of certain legitimate aspirations towards a more equitable social and economic order, is fundamentally opposed to Catholicism, and this opposition must be made clear. Soviet Communism will then appear in its true light as a veritable anti-religion. It has its god, which is the proletariat; its Messiah—Lenin; its prophets and its bible—Karl Marx, Engels, and their writings; its pope—Stalin; its priests and missionaries—the controllers and proselytes of the Comintern; its universal church—the Third International; its orthodox doctrine—Leninist Marxism; its heretics—Zinovieff, Kameneff, Trotsky; its apostates—Kautsky, Doriot.

If we hold with Stalin,<sup>1</sup> that the world has now reached

<sup>1</sup> Stalin : *Leninism, Theoretical and Practical*, Paris, Bureau d'Éditions (communistes), 1933, p. 3.

the 'imperialist' stage or that of 'capitalism in decay,' we may define Soviet Communism as 'the Marxism of the age of imperialism and of the proletarian revolution.' Soviet Communism, in fact, is a form of Marxism. The terminology may vary—sometimes it is called Bolshevism and sometimes Leninism—but the word matters little. The doctrine remains an extreme form of Socialism adapted to the present time. Its professors claim Karl Marx as their master and put themselves forward as the only true disciples.

Soviet Communism, like all forms of Marxian Socialism, is, by its very principles, its objects and the means by which it pursues them, incompatible with Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> It is opposed to all forms of Christianity, and particularly to Catholicism, as darkness to light, or death to life. In short, it is an anti-religion, rising up against religion.

Since Communism is a form of Marxism, its doctrine is essentially materialist, denying the spiritual world in all its forms. It will not admit the existence of God or of the soul. Catholicism, on the other hand, is essentially spiritual. These two doctrines, therefore, confront and seek to displace each other, for it is impossible that either should assimilate its rival in the way in which a young and vigorous civilization may take over an older one, modifying some of its forms. May we not say that we have already entered on a new phase of history in which wars are no longer the expression of conflicting national interests, but a clash of ideals, conflicts of opposing doctrines, often within the same nation, in which we see brother slaying brother?

This conflict of two ideologies seeking the mastery of the world is the expression of two different conceptions of life—the Christian and the Marxian. This is

<sup>1</sup> The British Labour Party, sometimes described as a Socialist Party, does not profess Marxian Socialism. The Church therefore permits the faithful to belong to this political body.

true not only of the individual existence, but of family, social, national, international and even economic life. None of these realms is completely independent of Catholic morality founded in natural law and in the eternal teaching of the gospel, and there is none of them in which the Christian can consider himself outside the divine law of which the Church, which is its guardian, teaches us the practical applications. On the other hand, there is none of them in which the Communist can definitely adopt the Catholic position without, at the same time, renouncing his Marxian dogmas.

The individual life of the Christian is subject to the duties imposed by a spiritual religion, through which he is to realize his last end, the salvation of his soul, but the Communist can recognize no religion except his anti-religious doctrine, no other God than the proletariat, no other life than that of matter, no other world than the present one and no paradise but the illusory earthly paradise of a classless society.

If we turn from the individual to family life, we find an equally flagrant conflict of doctrines. The Christian family is founded on indissoluble marriage, of which the primary object is the continuance of the race. In the U.S.S.R., which prides itself on practising Communist principles, free unions are the rule. The Muscovite code requires that the union should be registered, but it can be dissolved at the wish of one of the parties. Abortion and 'birth-control' are both permitted, and the most varied methods are tolerated.

It is true that a reaction has recently set in. The new Soviet law, introduced on June 28, 1936, and unanimously passed by the Pan-Soviet Congress on the 2nd of the following December, abolished the right of unilateral divorce. The law lays it down that 'henceforth divorce may be granted at the *Zags* (Register Office) only after previous notice given personally by



the two parties. This should be mentioned on their passports.' Moreover, the sum charged for registering a divorce will no longer be only three roubles, but is 'fixed at fifty roubles for the first divorce, 150 for the second, 300 for the third and subsequent divorces.' There are also limitations of the right of abortion, which in future will be authorized only in certain exceptional cases.

This is the text of the Law of June 28, 1936, on the subject :

'The injurious effects of abortion being recognized, it is forbidden to perform the operation either in hospitals and special medical institutions, or in the private houses of the patients. The operation is authorized only in cases where the continuance of the pregnancy threatens the life or may gravely injure the health of the woman, or in cases where serious illnesses of the parents might be transmitted by heredity. The operation is sanctioned only in maternity hospitals or nursing homes.

'For any abortion practised other than in a hospital or even in a hospital if the above-mentioned conditions are not fulfilled, the doctor responsible may be punished with one or two years' imprisonment. For the practice of abortion in insanitary conditions or by unqualified persons a penalty of not less than three years' imprisonment may be imposed.

'A penalty of two years' imprisonment may be imposed for the offence of compelling a woman to procure an abortion.

'Women resorting to abortion in contravention of this law will be reprimanded and, on a repetition of the offence, may be fined a sum not exceeding 200 roubles.'

This is certainly a change of direction, but it is permissible to doubt whether it will be sufficient to

restrain abuses which have been legally encouraged for eighteen years. In any case, it is obvious that no mere legislative change will re-establish morality in this modern Sodom whose territory occupies a sixth part of the globe. Moreover, in spite of modifications inspired by purely material considerations, there is still a gulf between the Soviet family laws and the obligations imposed by Catholic morality for safeguarding the unity of marriage and its primary end.

In social life, which is simply the continuation of the family, the opposition between the Christian and Communist conceptions is irreducible. Christianity works for the harmony of all classes, while Communism sets itself to exacerbate the ancient hostility which divides them. Christianity lays upon the conscience the obligation of justice and charity, while Communism knows no other justice than a chimerical equality. As for Christian charity, this is regarded as contrary to Communist principles and an obstacle to the development of the revolution. All that the disciples of Marx can admit is a selfish love for the Communist Party and the working class, and this egotistic affection will find its natural sequel in jealousy of other classes. Lunacharsky is quite explicit on this point: 'Down with the love of our neighbour! What we need is hate. It is only by learning to hate that we can hope to conquer the world.'<sup>1</sup> The fact is that each of these two ideologies which confront one another claims universality. Both of them want to conquer the whole of human society, but they are opposed equally in their method. Jesus seeks to win the world by love and by peace to men of good will, Lenin by hatred and bloody revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by the Rev. Edmond Walsh, former Director of the Pontifical Mission of Rescue in Russia, in a report read to the Catholic Press Congress at Brussels on September 2, 1930, and reproduced by the D.C. of November 22, 1930, column 939.

The same discordance is found in the Christian and Communist conceptions of nationalism and internationalism. How could it be otherwise when they have such different starting-points? The first principle of Christian nationalism and internationalism is the universal sovereignty of God, Creator, Redeemer, and supreme end of man. Since the Communist doctrine denies the very existence of God, how can it accord Him any rights in political or international life? Only the deified proletariat has true rights, and everything else should be sacrificed to it.

Catholic internationalism recognizes the rights of the earthly Fatherland, while seeking to maintain union between the different countries by the application of the eternal principles of justice and charity. This internationalism is rooted in peace, founded on the brotherhood of all men in Adam and in Jesus Christ. Communist internationalism is hostile to the idea of nationality, at least of any nation not governed under a Soviet regime. This kind of internationalism can only be realized by the class war and the spread of the world revolution. To be true to the doctrine of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, 'the revolution, victorious in one country, has as its essential task, to develop and support revolution in the others.'<sup>1</sup>

Finally, in the economic sphere, Catholicism subordinates material prosperity to the moral and intellectual perfection of the individual and of society. Admittedly a Christian may without dishonouring his title, seek a reasonable comfort and even a degree of wealth, but he must do it in accordance with the laws of justice and charity and he must regard the acquisition of earthly goods as a means of moral and intellectual elevation.

Prosperity and progress to the Communist mean only a purely material prosperity and progress. In a Communist society the individual, like the State, has

<sup>1</sup> Stalin : *op. cit.*, p. 59.

no other aim and regards this as an end in itself. This conception of economic life, so contrary to the Christian conception, is condemned by Pope Leo XIII in these words: 'A State which could offer its members only the outward advantages of an easy and cultivated life, which, in its government of society, took no account of God and morality, would be unworthy of the name, it would be a vain imitation, a deceptive institution.'<sup>1</sup>

The Church, it is true, leaves nothing undone to secure for every man the minimum of well-being which is necessary to the development of his spiritual personality. As a zealous guardian of souls she cannot neglect economic conditions. It is on this ground that she is able to meet the Communists in making certain common claims for the improvement of the lot of the workers and the removal of social inequalities, but even in this common action for purely practical ends, the opposition of principle between the doctrines of Moscow and of Rome remains absolute. Indeed, the subordination of the material to the spiritual in all the economic claims made by Catholicism on behalf of the workers gives these claims themselves a different meaning when they are made by representatives of the Church from that which attaches to them when advanced by the spokesmen of the Comintern.

The conflict of principle between Communism and Catholicism is equally marked when we consider the ends which they pursue. The aim of Communism is to establish the most perfect equality among men, a society without class distinctions, and, in order to bring this about, the suppression of private property, which is regarded as the principal cause of social inequalities which, through a false conception of justice, are regarded as unjust. The possessions of the individual would, under Communism, become common

<sup>1</sup> In the Encyclical 'Sapientia Christiana.'

property, and their administration would be handed over to the municipalities or to the State. The end here pursued is regarded by Catholicism as 'supremely unjust because it violates the legitimate rights of owners, distorts the functions of the State and threatens to uproot the social edifice from its foundations.'<sup>1</sup> Has not the experiment of Socialism in Russia shown very clearly how Utopian is the idea of equality among men? Have not the Bolshevik tyrants, under the pretence of establishing this equality, become themselves an exploiting oligarchy?

But if we may say so, the methods by which Communism seeks to achieve its objects are still more incompatible with Catholicism and indeed with all forms of Christianity and of religion. In order to realize the illusory equality among men from which it expects happiness on earth, Communism proposes the violent destruction of religion, regarded as a drug employed by Capitalism to stupefy the people in countries yet to be conquered and as an obstacle to 'Socialist construction' in conquered countries.

The necessity of liquidating religion in order to carry out the Communist 'plan' is taught in the clearest possible terms by the high priests of contemporary materialism. Before he attained power, Lenin, speaking as the interpreter of Marx, preached this doctrine on various occasions. 'We must fight religion,' he wrote in 1909. 'That is the A.B.C. of all materialism and therefore of Marxism. Marxism, however, does not limit itself to the A.B.C. It goes further, and says that we must know how to fight religion.'<sup>2</sup>

Again: 'The dictum of Marx that religion is the opium of the people is the very corner-stone of any Marxist conception in religious matters. Religions, modern churches, religious organizations of all sorts,

<sup>1</sup> Leo XIII: Encyclical 'Rerum Novarum.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 'Proletari,' No. 45, 26/13 May, 1909.

are always regarded by Marxism as instruments of bourgeois reaction.<sup>1</sup>

Stalin is equally clear on this point. In an article published in *Bezbojnik* of November 17, 1934, on 'The Report of the Leader and Our Tasks,' we find: 'Stalin's report must be regarded by all who are working on the anti-religious front as the basis of their plan of action. It shows that anti-religious propaganda has an essential part to play in the class war and is particularly important to the development of the second Five Year Plan.'

It was Stalin once more who, a few months later, gave the following order: 'Let there be no neutrality where religion is concerned. Against the propagators of religious absurdities, against the ecclesiastics who poison the minds of the labouring masses, the Communist Party can only carry on war.'

So far from being weakened with the passage of time this doctrine is to-day a part of the official programme of the Third International, in virtue of which every Communist is required 'to fight implacably and systematically against religion.' In *Bezbojnik* of August, 1935, Yaroslavsky-Gubelmann, outlining the tasks for the years to come, said: 'There can be no rest, no truce, on the anti-religious front! There must be renewed activity, we must reorganize our propaganda and strengthen our ranks. Let us employ not only a criticism of the social offshoots of religion, but a scientific criticism of religion itself.'

We need not be astonished if our ecclesiastical teachers have frequently repeated their condemnation of Socialism and therefore of Communism. Following on the Encyclical 'Qui Pluribus' (November 9, 1846), there has been a succession of such condemnations, following each other at intervals of a few years,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>2</sup> A list of these condemnations will be found at the end of this volume.

insisting sometimes on one aspect of the subject, sometimes on another. One of the most celebrated of these documents is the Encyclical 'Rerum Novarum' (May 16, 1891), in which Leo XIII, after refuting Socialism, defined the social doctrine of Catholicism as the true remedy for the evils of contemporary society. Forty years later Pius XI, recalling and elaborating this doctrine in the Encyclical 'Quadragesimo Anno' (May 15, 1931), condemned contemporary Communism in these explicit terms :

'When they have attained to power, it is unbelievable, indeed it seems portentous, how cruel and inhuman they show themselves to be. Evidence for this is the ghastly destruction and ruin with which they have laid waste immense tracts of *Eastern Europe and Asia* ; while their antagonism and open hostility to Holy Church and to God Himself are, alas, but too well known and proved by their deeds. We do not think it necessary to warn upright and faithful children of the Church against the impious and nefarious character of Communism. But We cannot contemplate without sorrow the heedlessness of those who seem to make light of these imminent dangers, and with stolid indifference allow the propagation far and wide of those doctrines which seek by violence and bloodshed the destruction of all society. Even more severely must be condemned the foolhardiness of those who neglect to remove or modify such conditions as exasperate the minds of the people, and so prepare the way for the overthrow and ruin of the social order.'

In spite of these repeated condemnations some people have tried to find possible grounds of agreement between Marxism and Christianity. In 1935 there appeared a review entitled *Terre Nouvelle*,

describing itself as 'the organ of the revolutionary Christians.' In addition to this curious title the journal bore on its cover a symbol in which the Cross joined the hammer and sickle to represent the ideology—Utopian to say the least of it—of the promoters.

In face of such attempts we need not be surprised to find Pope Pius XI reasserting and explaining the incompatibility between Christianity on the one hand and Socialism or Communism on the other. On various occasions the ordinary teaching body of the Church has echoed the voice of the Roman pontiffs in impressing this timely lesson on the faithful. We shall have occasion to return to this. For the moment we content ourselves with a passage from the 'Declaration' of the Cardinals and Archbishops of France on March 25, 1925, when they recalled in very clear terms the teaching of Catholicism on this point. 'Religion,' they said, 'leaves everyone free to be republican, royalist or imperialist, because all these forms of Government are compatible with it. It does not leave them free to be Socialist, Communist, or Anarchist, because these three sects are condemned by reason and by the Church.'

The position of Catholicism, therefore, is categorical. In the order of truth, there can be no doctrinal agreement between Catholicism on the one hand and Socialism or Communism on the other.<sup>1</sup> In other terms—to quote the words of Pius XI in the Encyclical

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between 'the order of truth' and 'the order of charity' is dealt with in the important declarations of the Very Rev. Fr. Gillet in *Le Figaro* of November 26, 1935, in which he shows clearly that while no doctrinal agreement between Catholicism and Socialism is possible in the first of these orders, 'there may and must be individual *rapprochements* in the order of charity. That is the duty and the secret of all apostleship. Among the Socialists and the Communists there are many decent people in good faith, but deceived and blinded by seductive doctrines and evil examples.' Cf. on this subject the writings of Fr. Lhande and of Jean de Vincennes on the suburbs of Paris.



'Quadragesimo Anno'—'religious Socialism or Christian Socialism are expressions implying a contradiction in terms, since nobody can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist.'

The position of the leading theorists of Soviet Communism is equally categorical. According to Bukharin and Preobrajensky,<sup>1</sup> 'a Communist who disobeys the commands of religion and follows the lead of the Party ceases to be religious. A believer, on the other hand, who pretends to be a Communist but disobeys the Party in the name of religious obligations, ceases to be a Communist.' In short, as we read in the *A.B.C. of Communism*, which may be regarded as the catechism of Soviet schools, 'religion and Communism are incompatible alike in theory and in practice.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N. Bukharin and Preobrajensky: *A.B.C. du Communism*, Paris, 1923, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ANTI-RELIGION IN POWER

Advent to power of the anti-religion—Origin and first stages of the Union of Godless—The Union of Militant Godless: its structure—Methods: general principles, the Atheist school, propaganda by the Press, exhibitions, and lantern lectures—Science to the rescue—Food shortage as a means of propaganda.

‘The fight against religion is the fight for Socialism.’ (Motto of the Union of Militant Godless.)

#### *I. Rise and Early Stages of the Godless.*

IT follows from the principles here described that the advent of the Communist Party to power meant the advent of the anti-religion. The first stage of the way marked out by the theorists of contemporary Marxism was completed in October, 1917, when the Communist Party seized power in Tsarist Russia and established by force a Soviet Government maintained by the dictatorship of the proletariat. As soon as they found themselves masters of the situation, at the end of 1917, Lenin and his followers set themselves to sweep away every vestige of the old capitalist society from the ground that they had captured. They began a fierce struggle against the Church and religion which they regarded as an integral part of that society. In the first years following the winter of 1917–1918, however, the anti-religious struggle was not an organized one. A number of men—Yaroslavsky, Stepanov-Skworzov, and Krassikov—were specially set apart for the direction of this unholy work, but except for a few anti-religious campaigns which were the special work

of the *komsomoltzi* or Communist Youth Movement, the fight against religion retained an individual character. About that time, however, atheist cells began to be set up in the towns and the country-side. In 1923 the Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party resolved upon a systematic anti-religious action in order to prevent 'the shaken and embarrassed religious prejudices from regaining ground.' Two newspapers, *Bezbojnik* (The Godless) and *Bezbojnik on Stanka* (The Godless in the Workshop), made their appearance, both authentic organs of the anti-religion. They stimulated the proselytizing zeal of the Muscovite atheists, who, in 1925, founded the U.S.D. or Union of the Godless.

This association, of which the Jew Yaroslavsky-Gubelmann was president, is nothing more nor less than an auxiliary of the Third International, of which it is the advance guard on the anti-religious front. Its executive committee is the same as that of the Comintern. If every Communist is expected to be not only an atheist, but a fighter against religion, fighting in the most varied ways, this is even more true of the members of the U.S.D. They are the 'seminarists,' the 'priests,' and the 'missionaries' of the anti-religion in a stricter sense than the other members and leaders of the Comintern.

The object of this army is to introduce Marxist atheism among all the populations of the Soviet republics. To understand the life of the U.S.D. is to understand specifically the life of the anti-religion.

The atheist cell is one of the principal methods of conquest by the Godless. It aims at permeating the populations, so that they shall be gradually won over to Communist atheism. Three classes are particularly the object of anti-religious activity—the workmen, the peasants, and youth. From 1925 to 1929 the

number of these cells increased.<sup>1</sup> In 1926 the U.S.D. had 2421 cells and 87,033 members; in 1927 3121 cells and 138,402 members; in 1928, 3980 cells and 123,007 members.

This constant progress—apart from a set-back in 1928—did not satisfy the Moscow atheists, who complained that the anti-religious action was not being carried on with sufficient vigour.

At its second Congress, held at Moscow in June, 1929, the U.S.D. decided to increase its forces rapidly and to take up a definitely aggressive attitude. Comrade Kalinin, president of the Pan-Russian Executive Committee, explained in very plain language that 'the fight against religion is a necessary and supremely effective way of preparing the road to Communism.'<sup>2</sup> He ended with these words: 'If the Government action seems weak to you who are the leaders of the atheist campaign, remember that we have to increase and develop our centres of action so that the Government will not be able to restrict its measures against religion.'

## II. *The Union of Militant Godless: Structure and General Principles.*

Henceforward the U.S.D. was resolved to take on a definitely aggressive character and in order to mark this new attitude it adopted the name of Union of Militant Godless (U.S.D.M.). According to its rules,<sup>3</sup> it aims at 'uniting the working masses of the U.S.S.R. with the object of a systematic and continual struggle

<sup>1</sup> The figures given here are those of Konrad Algermissen in *Die Gottlosenbewegung der Gegenwart und ihre Überwindung* (Verlag Joseph Giesel, Hanover, 1933), p. 128. They are taken from the Moscow official statistics and therefore differ from those which we gave in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of February 1, 1935, p. 570, as corresponding to the estimates of the most impartial witnesses.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Izvestia*, June 19, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

against all religions, which are an obstacle to Socialist construction and to revolutionary culture.'

A resolution of February 26, 1934, describes in detail the actual structure of the Union of Militant Godless in the Soviet Republics.<sup>1</sup> The Union is based on an organization of cells which permeate workshops, factories, and collective farms (*kol'khoz*), as well as the different units of the Red Army. Where there are less than fifteen members the cell will be governed by an organizer and in the case of larger cells by a committee of three to five members. Where there are various professional units in a workshop each will have its own organizer. A special register is to be kept of the militants of the U.S.D., who will receive in addition to their Union Membership Card, a militant's card which will be issued and renewed by regional or urban councils. The provincial councils are continued in existence and the workers of the regional council of the U.S.D. are also charged with work among national minorities, the organization of united campaigns, anti-religious work among children and the scientific and educational services of the union. The executive committee at the head of this great organization is replaced by periodical conferences of the local councils who are to deal with the various questions relating to the activities of the Union. The Plenum and the Presidium of the Central Council are maintained in existence and directed by the President or, in his absence, by his assistant or the acting secretary.

The whole population of the Soviet Republics is thus brought under the influence of the Militant Godless. If Christianity is the principal target for the godless artillery their batteries do not spare any religion. Stepanoff laid this down very clearly some years ago when he said: 'We must act in such a manner that

<sup>1</sup> The full text signed by the Central Council of the U.S.D.M. appeared in *Antireligioznik*, Nos. 2 & 3, 1934.

every blow struck at the traditional structure of the Church or of the clergy reaches religion as a whole. . . . Even the blindest must recognize how indispensable is a decisive struggle against the priest, whether he call himself pastor, curate, rabbi, patriarch, mullah, or pope. Equally remorselessly we must fight "against God" whether he be known as Jehovah, Jesus, Buddha, or Allah.<sup>1</sup> With equal cynicism in July, 1934, Comrade Oleshchuk proclaimed the hatred of true Communists for all forms of belief in God. 'It is impossible,' he wrote, in an article entitled 'Reply to a Believer,'<sup>2</sup> 'to draw any line of demarcation between the true Christians and Christians in inverted commas. Ultimately all believers are alike. All religion, as Marx pointed out, is opium for the people. Every religion is an instrument of exploitation, a means of putting the workers to sleep. That is why we are against them all.'

The propaganda of the Moscow Atheists is carefully prepared. Far from being applied without discrimination to the various classes of the population it displays all the suppleness of Leninism, which adapts itself to the existing situation in order to exploit it with more success. Here is the advice of Golovkin, one of the high priests in these matters:<sup>3</sup> Anti-religious propaganda should take account of the different types of mind. From this point of view there are two great classes to be considered—believers and unbelievers. Among the former our work is to undermine the foundations of their faith, whereas the latter need only to be encouraged to remain firm in their unbelief and to become militant atheists.

<sup>1</sup> Stepanoff: 'Problems and Methods of Anti-Religious Propaganda,' Moscow, 1923, quoted by *Documentation Catholique*, April 19, 1930, col. 1010.

<sup>2</sup> *Bezbojnik*, July 29, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Golovkin: 'Organization and Methods of Anti-Religious Work,' Moscow, State Publications, 1934, *passim*.

The Godless propagandist does not distinguish between the war against religion and the class war. He will not wound the religious sentiments of believers if he runs a risk of defeating his ultimate object. He will make a very comprehensive criticism of the origins and developments of religion, its teaching and the relations of the individual to society. Work among women is not neglected for, according to Golovkin: 'As long as they are backward, it is among them that religion will find its surest refuge.'

Here are the instructions given to the Godless in order to disseminate the Anti-religion among children.<sup>1</sup> 'This work demands special attention. We have to lead the child to an atheist conception of the world, to give him a sound notion of nature and man. We must explain to him the part played by religion in the class war, though naturally in a form suited to his understanding, and awaken his determination to fight against the religious prejudices of his family and his surroundings.'

Golovkin is equally explicit<sup>2</sup> on the steps to be taken to give children a truly atheist upbringing. 'The anti-religious education,' he says, 'should commence as early as possible. What the child learns in his tender years will be the foundation of all his future development . . . we all know how difficult it is to re-educate the child in school when he arrives there with religious habits of thought. It is necessary, therefore, to take all measures to see that from his earliest years he absorbs atheist conceptions. The school should carry on this work.'

These principles are literally applied: 'In the kindergartens and nursery schools the children are placed in an atmosphere favourable to our aims.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Bulletin Religieux*, E.I.A., No. 6 of February 28, 1935, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit.

Naturally we cannot prove to a child of three or four years that God does not exist, but we show him by our whole attitude that we do not believe in a God, nor look to one for any help.'

Moscow, in fact, considers anti-religious propaganda as an integral part of its 'politico-educational' work and makes use of all the means employed in its 'politico-social' action in order to influence the mind. 'The school,' writes Lukachevsky, 'develops the anti-religious education while the Soviet Press, cinema, radio, literature, and art also fight against religion.'<sup>1</sup>

### *III. The Atheist School.*

Of all these weapons one of the most powerful for destroying 'religious ideology' in the rising generation is undoubtedly atheist teaching in school. The Commissariat of Education employs the most ingenious methods for uprooting from the Russian soul any seeds of Christian reaction, for these are found continually sprouting in the hidden depths of consciousness among the converts to militant atheism and even among the young people who are brought up in ignorance of the civilizations of yesterday. Anti-religious schoolmasters are accordingly very carefully trained. Those Christians who remain in their positions, under condition of hiding their sentiments, are continually spied upon by the Ogpu, as well as their pupils. In *Izvestia* as long ago as March 26, 1929, Lunacharsky wrote: 'Teachers who are believers are an absurd contradiction and the local education authorities should lose no opportunity of replacing them by anti-religious teachers.' A few months later, in June of the same year, at the Second Congress of the Godless, the same Lunacharsky, who was now People's Commissar for Education, laid it down: 'Education with us cannot

<sup>1</sup> Lukachevsky: *New Anti-Religious Manual*, Moscow, 1933.



be other than Communist and, therefore, it cannot be other than anti-religious.'

Again, at the second Conference of Anti-religious Scientific Institutes, at Moscow, from June 13 to 15, 1934, it was laid down that: 'Communist education of the child must include an anti-religious education.'<sup>1</sup> *Bezbojnik* of June 17, 1934, declared that 'Soviet educational institutions must produce militant Godless.' This, according to the *Antireligioznik*,<sup>2</sup> is how a Bolshevik schoolmistress explained her policy: 'My aim has been to produce anti-religionists who will become conscious and well-equipped fighters against religion in school, at home, and in the street. The work begins with the children of nine years. One tells them specially selected stories and the talks are designed to place before them some practical problem of the fight against religion. After a talk of this kind, I ask the children if they want to fight against religion. . . . They at once offer to repeat what they have heard to others and to fight at home for the removal of crucifixes and persuade other children to do the same, to prepare anti-religious notices and place them about the school and in the street.' The teacher concludes: 'The teacher's work consists in correcting errors and directing the anti-religious struggle of the children into the right channels.'

Those who wish to enter the universities or take the higher school examinations must abandon all hope unless they are prepared to make a profession of militant atheism.

'When I was Priest-in-Charge at —, Leningrad,'<sup>3</sup> writes a priest who is no longer in the U.S.S.R., 'I undertook the education in my own home of a young Catholic orphan of fifteen years, Donat X. He completed his study at the school of military engineers

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bezbojnik*, June 29, 1934.      <sup>2</sup> *Antireligioznik*, No. 7, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished Memoirs.

but the university was closed to him. He successfully passed the examination but there was another obstacle to be overcome, the test of "political fidelity." This is what happened at this strange examination : Several examiners were seated round a table. Donat took his seat, keeping his hat on and resting his arms on the table, which pleased the examiners as a sign of truly proletarian carelessness.

" " You are a believer ? "

" " Yes."

" " You attend the Lutheran chapel ? "

" " No." (Knowing that he was a Latvian, the examiners assumed that he would be a Protestant.)

' They were pleased to learn that Donat was not a chapel-goer, but one of the examiners recognized him and knew him to be a Catholic, so the interrogations were resumed :

" " You go to the Catholic church ? "

" " Yes."

" " Do you wear a cross round your neck ? "

" " I do."

" " You took part in the Corpus Christi procession ? "

" " Yes."

' A few words passed between the examiners, and one of them handed Donat a printed paper and said : " Sign this and we will pass you." The paper contained a pledge to throw away his cross and to renounce religion and theological studies as the opium of the people. Outraged at this proposal the young man spat on the floor and went out without a word, slamming the door behind him.'

The priest adds : ' I felt a deep affection for this child when he told me his story. May God protect him.' The schoolmistress of whom we have spoken said of the young Communists, ' they must feel themselves to be members of the great army of the Godless.'

This task of giving the child a feeling of close

solidarity with 'the great army of the Godless' is not looked upon as a matter of small importance in Soviet anti-religious education. He is put in contact with other children or youths belonging to groups of avowed militant atheists such as the Red Pioneers and the Communist Youth, and this contact strengthens and continues the 'deformation' begun in school.

This is how Yaroslavsky<sup>1</sup> defines the duties of the young atheists :

'The Pioneer should be in the front rank of the fighters against religion. Therefore he should be taught all the evils it causes. He is a true disciple of Lenin to the extent that he fights against it. As a Pioneer he stands up for the struggle against all religion, for the overthrow of religion in the family, in the school and among his comrades. Stand for the creation of atheist groups. Be courageous and not afraid of persecution. Glorify atheism in front of the grown-ups, even the best educated.'

According to the vice-president of the Union of the Godless,<sup>2</sup> whose testimony on this point may be accepted, 'the Red Pioneers' organization carries out strictly the wishes of Lenin regarding systematic Communist education, of which one of the essential elements is the fight for a Godless philosophy.'

#### *IV. Press Propaganda.*

The Press, no less than the school, is at the service of atheistic Soviet propaganda : it blasphemes vindictively against God, and over the human conscience, which is the reflection of the Divine law, it vomits the poison of Bolshevik materialism.

The State publishing houses issue anti-religious publications of very unequal value, a bibliography of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Izvestia*, August 17, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Bezbojnik*, May 29, 1934.

which appears periodically in *Bezbojnik* and *Antireligioznik*.

Books, pamphlets, tracts, newspapers of all kinds combine their efforts to uproot religion and secure the triumph of proletarian ideology. Here are some of the works published in Russia to promote this destructive effort, and specially recommended by the Bolshevik organs:<sup>1</sup> *Leninist Marxism, Militant Atheism* (1933-1934); *Anti-Religious Manual for the Workers*; *The Philosophy of the Godless*; *The Religious Instinct and Criminality*; *Anti-Religious Education in the School*; *Programme of the Anti-Religious Workers' University*; *Anti-Religious Correspondence Course*; *How to Fight Religion*; *The Campaign against God*; *Soviet Legislation to Aid the Struggle against Believers*; *Fifteen Years of Militant Atheism in the U.S.S.R.* (1932); *Anti-Religious Education in the Elementary School* (1934); *The Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party and the Problems of the Anti-Religious Effort* (1934); *Organization and Methods of Anti-Religious Propaganda* (1934); Yaroslavsky: *Against Religion and the Church*, Vol. 4 (1935); Putinintzeff: *The Political Role and Tactics of the Sects* (1935); Amosov: *Christ* (1935).

Thousands of these anti-religious publications have been issued by the State in recent years. In 1935 alone Moscow distributed eleven million atheist books in Europe in six languages.<sup>2</sup>

If we add to this list the names of several Moscow periodicals, authorized organs of Militant Atheism, such as *Bezbojnik*,<sup>3</sup> *Antireligioznik*, *Bez-*

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this list is taken from the multigraphed text of the Report of the Third Session of the International Commission, 'Pro Deo,' September 10-11, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Figures given by H.E. Cardinal Innitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, in an address on October 11, 1936, in the presence of President Miklas and the leading personalities of the civil and religious world.

<sup>3</sup> This journal ceased publication in January, 1935, but the accounts which it formerly published now appear in the illustrated *Bezbojnik* and in the *Antireligioznik*.

*bojnik* (illustrated), *Neuland*, etc., we shall have some idea of the activity of the Soviet Press in this department.

#### *V. Exhibitions and Lantern Lectures.*

Exhibitions are among the methods peculiar to Stalin's government, aiming at permeating the masses with irreligious sentiments. In 1929 a Central Anti-Religious Museum was opened in Moscow. 'Conceived and executed according to the materialist conception of evolution,' we are told,<sup>1</sup> 'it provides a complete anti-religious education in a few hours.' According to *Bezbojnik* of June 10, 1934, it has been visited by hundreds of thousands of workers. It is an active propaganda centre and sends anti-religious exhibits for display in the public parks, factories, workshops, and the *kolkhoz*. This central museum alone, between December, 1932, and November, 1933, organized and sent to the Russian provinces 679 circulating exhibitions to spread Marx-Leninist atheism. Its library comprises more than thirty thousand volumes at the disposal of all engaged in the fight against religion. After giving this information the Bolshevik journal calls upon the Soviets as well as the councils and cells of the Militant Godless to increase still further the number of group visits to the museum, recalling that such visits have caused many believers to take the first step on the way to atheism.

In order to enable Communists of moderate education to take part at little cost to themselves in this infernal propaganda, they can procure for a few roubles edited reports of the lectures given by the Central Council of the Union of the Godless, with lantern slides provided. Here are some of the titles published in the third number of *Antireligioznik* in 1934: 'The Pope of

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Koch in *Russia To-day*, April, 1934.

Rome in the Service of the Capitalists' (5 roubles); 'Religion in the Service of the International Bourgeoisie' (10 roubles); 'Woman Emancipated from Religious Oppression' (6 roubles); 'Imperialist War and Religion' (10 roubles).

The subjects outlined for the years 1935 and 1936 are of the same type. Here are some of them: 'The Place of Literature in Anti-Religious Propaganda'; 'Lucretius and his Criticism of Religion'; 'The Satire of Rabelais on the Catholic Church'; 'The Anti-Ecclesiastical Works of Emile Zola'; 'Soviet Literature in its Fight against Religion.'

These lantern lectures lend a support to the effective work of the theatres, the radio, and above all the cinema, each of which plays its part in this implacable struggle against every form of theism.

## VI. *Science to the Rescue.*

In order to arrive with more certainty at their goal the leaders of the U.S.D.M. seek to give a 'scientific' character to their atheist offensive. Basing themselves on Stalin's stupid paradox: 'I am against religion because I am in favour of science,' they seek to prove the incompatibility of one and the other. They forget, or do not know, that prior to an act of faith the reason must know that the act is reasonable and that if the act of faith presupposes the operation of grace it is none the less the adherence of the intelligence to Divine truth.

In 1934 they floated an 'anti-religious scientific loan,' intended to stimulate their 'men of science' to action. Scientists subscribing to the loan were not required, like ordinary mortals, to pay out their money, but only to give a written undertaking to deliver lectures and to publish 'scientific' anti-religious articles. The fulfilment of this undertaking absolved them from any financial investment. New discoveries

were to be expected from these pseudo-savants, some of whom have already reached the conclusion that 'the Christ of the Gospel never existed'!

From June 13 to 15, 1934, the Congress of scientific institutes engaged in atheist propaganda drew together in Moscow the delegates of twenty-eight anti-religious institutions, such as the anti-religious sections of the Institute of Philosophy, Communist Academy, Institute of Public Health, Institute of Pedagogy, etc. Among the questions studied were the apologetics of believers and, as *Bezbojnik*<sup>1</sup> put it, the reasons which prevent them from 'getting rid of religious prejudices,' the means of 'unveiling the counter-revolutionary role of all churches in the service of imperialism and particularly the counter-revolutionary part played by religion and the church in the Soviet countries.' In their 'scientific' anti-religious offensive the Communist leaders aim at establishing in the mind of the proletariat a necessary association between religion, capitalism, imperialism, and Fascism. Every member of the Third International is expected to feel an instinctive repugnance for all these realities at once, regarding them as detestable idols of the old Capitalist society.

### *VII. Food Shortage as a Means of Propaganda.*

While the Godless offensive is conducted on the intellectual plane, the legal is not neglected. The Commissariat of Education is not alone in helping the Communist anti-religious activities by occasional proclamations. Other ministries play their part in a systematic persecution of believers. Thus, on April 8, 1929, the Home Office (Commissariat of the Interior) issued a decree forbidding any religious association: (1) To organize mutual relief funds, co-operative societies, or producers' unions; (2) to administer

<sup>1</sup> *Bezbojnik*, June 29, 1934.

relief to their members ; (3) to organize prayer meetings for children, youths or women or to hold groups or circles for biblical or literary study, manual work, religious instruction, etc. ; (4) to organize outings or playing-fields for the children ; (5) to have libraries, reading-rooms, sanatoria, or dispensaries.

Under orders issued by the Home Office which were still in force at the end of 1934, ministers of religion were deprived of food cards. They and their children were included in the category of non-workers, and therefore deprived of their civic rights. They could obtain work only by publicly renouncing their faith. The suppression of 'bread cards' on January 1, 1935, did not alter the situation, for ministers of religion, not having the right to work, were unable to earn enough money to live.

As for the children of the Orthodox clergy, they were required to repudiate their parents publicly. What tragedies there were of this kind ! Here is the account of one of these poignant scenes witnessed by M. A——, a Russian Orthodox. The victim was a young man whose father had been arrested and whose family was in a state of destitution. M. A——, from motives of pity, gave him some work.

'At the end of a month'—we are quoting this authentic testimony literally—'some young ruffian reported to the authorities that the boy was the son of a priest. Horrors ! The son of a Russian priest in a Soviet organization ! A general meeting was summoned and the chiefs and their staffs decided the fate of the boy. This "class enemy," aged 16, had first to listen to all the insults that were heaped on his father. Then the chairman proposed that they should demand a public repudiation of the parent if the boy was to keep his place. A vote was taken, but in this country everybody has to say yes if he wishes to get his daily bread. The poor lad trembled and reddened.



“ “ Do you repudiate your father ? ”

‘ Where were the boy’s thoughts at that moment ? Were they with his father dying in Siberia or with his mother and sister, depending upon him for the means to live ?

“ “ Do you repudiate him ? ”

‘ Poor Sacha, what did you go through ? A barely audible voice answered : “ Yes, I repudiate him.”

‘ The meeting was over and the men separated without looking at each other. . . . A week later, the family of the priest received news that he was dead. Sacha did not raise his eyes when he passed us.’<sup>1</sup>

Up to the beginning of 1935 periodical lists of unhappy renegades appeared in *Bezbojnik*.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Chemin du Golgotha* (Editions du Bureau de la C.I. ‘ Pro Deo,’ Geneva, 1934), p. 24.

## CHAPTER III

### GROWTH OF THE UNION OF MILITANT GODLESS (JUNE, 1929-DECEMBER, 1935)

Growing activity of the Union of Militant Godless (U.S.D.M.)  
—The Bodenbach affair (November 15, 1930)—The U.S.D.M. and the Proletarian Freethinkers' International (P.F.I.) from November, 1930, to January, 1933—U.S.D.M. and P.F.I. from January, 1933, to the beginning of 1935: crises and new offensives—The U.S.S.R. in 1935 and 1936—Religious survivals and anti-religious activity.

'We have dethroned the emperors of this world and now we must dethrone the Emperor of Heaven.' *Bezbojnik*, 1.

#### *I. Growing Activity of the U.S.D.M.*

THANKS to the systematic application of these methods the U.S.D. on January 1, 1930, comprised 35,000 cells and 2,000,000 members. They displayed an ever-growing activity. According to the official figures 592 churches were closed in 1928 and this figure was to be exceeded in 1929. Each week *Bezbojnik* gave a list of churches either destroyed or turned into clubs or other secular institutions. Here, for example, is the statement published in the issue of June 30, 1929:<sup>1</sup>

'In the province of Kursk, the church of the Cherniavsky Monastery has been transformed into a Godless school, another near the saw-mill has become a club, the nunnery church in Stalingrad has been handed over to the tramway employees. In the village of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mgr Michel d'Herbigny in *Le Front Anti-religieux en Russie soviétique* (Paris, Spes, 1930), pp. 14 and 15.

Piany, in the Lgov district, the church has been closed and may be demolished. The four churches remaining in Solikamsk are closed and presented to the Society for Cultural Education and Propaganda.' (This, of course, means revolutionary and atheist education and propaganda.) 'The church at Tarin, in the province of Archangelsk, has become a trades union headquarters, and that of Kanychenno, in the Semipalatinsk district, a reading-room. At Yasnayapoliana, the village rendered famous by Tolstoy, the school which he conducted has been transferred to the disused church. The private chapel built at Thita by the millionaire Igniatev has been transformed into a citadel of anti-religious defence. In the village of Baskakovo, in the Viazma district, the church is now a hospital. The students of the Rabfak (working-men's college) at Odessa have demanded the neighbouring church for their club, and the professional associations at Buye have insisted on the cathedral being closed to religious services. The workmen at Pochaka, in the province of Briansk, have called for the closing of the Synagogue, and the same demand has been made by the professional associations of Alouchta, who wish to use the building for a club. The Catholic church of Svietloye Ozero on the middle Volga has been turned into a school.'

Parodying the Catholic religion, the anti-religion lays claim to universality. The aggressive propaganda of Muscovite atheism has for its objective not merely Soviet Russia, but the whole world. It is prepared to adopt the war cry contained in the first number of *Bezbojnik*:<sup>1</sup> 'We have dethroned the emperors of this world and now we must dethrone the Emperor of Heaven.'

In July, 1929, a little while after their second Congress, the Godless issued an appeal for the establishment of a great world-wide anti-religious front.<sup>2</sup> 'Our

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Antireligioznik*, No. 7, July, 1929, pp. 38 and 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

movement,' it said, 'is not that of a narrow sect, but the vanguard of an army of millions of atheists who must be organised. We are internationalists in our fight against God as we are in our fight against Capital.'

In 1930, the Godless, intoxicated by their successes at home in the U.S.S.R., endeavoured to permeate more and more the Proletarian Freethinkers' International and thus to establish a world-wide influence.

## *II. The Bodenbach Affair (November 15, 1930).*

The *Internationale Proletarische Freidenker* (I.P.F.), or Proletarian Freethinkers' International, founded at Teplitz in 1925, had its headquarters at Vienna until 1930. A Marxist and, therefore, atheist organization, it felt itself called to 'struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat from religious intoxication.' Professor Hartwig, an Austrian Social Democrat, condemned violent methods and urged that the organization should be content to 'permeate the masses with the new anti-religious culture.' This was the opinion also of several leaders of sections, in Germany, Czechoslovakia, France, Belgium, and Poland. Hence the P.F.I. did not recognize the Soviet persecutions nor the absolute authority of the Comintern. At the Fourth Congress, held at Bodenbach on November 15, 1930, the extremists, under the influence of Moscow, broke away from the moderate elements, whom they left to join up with the Radical-Socialist Freethinkers' International of Brussels to form an International Union of Freethinkers. The dissidents then transformed themselves into a purely Bolshevik organization, treating the others as 'lackeys of the priests' and devoting themselves to militant atheism. The title 'Freethinkers' was no longer applicable to them. 'We are enemies of liberty of thought,' they wrote in February, 1932,<sup>1</sup> 'because, fighting against religion on

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *La Lutte*, February, 1932.

a class basis we cannot tolerate any beliefs which, at the capitalist stage of history, are political arms at the service of the bourgeoisie. Liberty of conscience would mean a revolutionary victory for bourgeois ideology. Let us discard the term "freethinker" which has had its day and claim the honour of being atheists.'

The P.F.I., therefore, refused any alliance with the International Union of Freethinkers, whose toleration and lack of enterprise were ridiculed. It describes it as a 'reformist bourgeois' body,<sup>1</sup> and declares itself proudly to be 'the only world-wide organization which, under the banner of revolutionary atheism, leads the working masses to a fight against the Church and the counter-revolution, armed with dialectical materialism.'

After the split at Bodenbach, the Moscow Atheists, already united with the P.F.I. since 1925, consolidated the union. Henceforth the Union of Militant Godless was one with the P.F.I. and Soviet anti-religion has been able to develop rapidly, not only in the U.S.S.R., but throughout the world.

### *III. The U.S.D.M. and P.F.I. from November, 1930, to January, 1933.*

In 1930, while compulsory collectivism was pushed to extremes at the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party, the Commissariat of Labour and the Workmen's Unions received orders 'to organize and intensify anti-religious propaganda.' We need not be surprised, therefore, to find that the years from 1930 to 1933 have a melancholy distinction for the intensity of the campaign against religion. Priests and laity were imprisoned in large numbers, most of the churches closed or destroyed, and the Pope held up to ridicule.

On February 2, 1930, in an open letter to Cardinal

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *La Correspondance Internationale*, May 26, 1934, p. 859.

Pompili, the Holy Father appealed to public opinion against the religious persecutions in the U.S.S.R.

'Since Christmas,' wrote Pius XI, 'not only have several hundreds of churches been closed, ikons burned, workers and schoolchildren forced to take part in the campaign and the Sabbath rest abolished, but the factory workers, men and women, have been compelled to sign declarations of apostasy and of hatred against God under penalty of losing their bread-cards and food and shelter, without which in that unhappy country they can only die of famine, misery, and cold. In all the towns and many villages, moreover, infamous carnivals have been organized, such as those witnessed by foreign diplomats at the height of the Christmas festival in Moscow itself. Lorries passed along with urchins decorated with sacred ornaments, who mocked the Cross and spat upon it. On other motor vehicles there were great Christmas trees with effigies of Catholic or Orthodox bishops hanging from the branches. In the centre of the town other young hooligans performed all kinds of sacrilege against the Cross.'

The pontifical protests served only to increase the hatred of the Godless, which seems to have reached its zenith. There was a considerable increase in the circulation of the anti-religious journals. At the end of 1930 *Bezbojnik* had an issue of 400,000 copies, compared with 63,000 in 1928, and it was increased from four to eight pages.

A similar rise is seen in the number of members and of cells: On January 1, 1931, there were 50,000 cells and 3,500,000 members: in May of the same year, the cells numbered 60,000 and the members 5,000,000; on May 1, 1932, there were 80,000 cells with 7,000,000 members. To these figures must be added the 1,500,000 Godless children.

Yaroslavsky, writing of the second Five Year Plan at this period, said: 'This plan, which outlines the

programme of our economic development, is linked to another Five Year Plan intended at the same time to uproot religion.<sup>1</sup> Here is a summary of the five successive stages :

'First year : All religious schools to be closed and the first steps taken for the closing of churches in the capital.

'Second year : All persons professing any religion to be driven from the workshops and Government offices ; all religious literature to be prohibited and 150 anti-religious films to be produced, and shown throughout the Soviet Union, especially in the schools.

'Third year : This should be devoted to increasing the activity of the Godless cells and to the expulsion from the Soviet Union of all ecclesiastics, of whatever religion, who refuse to renounce their calling.

'Fourth year : All churches, chapels, and synagogues to be handed over to the local Soviet, to be turned into cinemas, clubs, or other places of intelligent pastime.

'Fifth year : To be devoted to the consolidation of ground gained on the anti-religious front. By May 1, 1937, all expressions of religion should be swept from Soviet territory and the very notion of God erased from the popular mind.'<sup>2</sup>

The most varied activities are carried on in order to intensify the anti-religious work. At one time, it is a Librarians' Congress in the U.S.S.R. in order to perfect

<sup>1</sup> E. Yaroslavsky : *Religion in U.S.S.R.* (New York, International Publishers, 1934), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Britain Without God : An Exposure of Anti-Godism*, by a London Journalist. Preface by Sir Thomas Inskip (London, Lutterworth Press, 1935), p. 35. The Soviets have always denied the existence of this Plan. Besides Yaroslavsky's declaration we have these proofs : (1) German Protestants have heard the Soviet radio refer to it. (2) It is referred to at length in *Quinze Ans d'Athéisme Militant en U.R.S.S.* (3) *Bezbojnik* of November 17, 1934, says : ' Anti-religious propaganda is an essential part of the class war, particularly important to the development of the second Five Year Plan.'

the anti-religious work of the libraries and to inspire the whole of Soviet literature with the same atheistic spirit ;<sup>1</sup> at another there is a circular intended for the masses. One of these begins by explaining that the Central Committee of the Militant Godless and the State Publications have undertaken the publication of books and pamphlets intended for believers, and it appeals to its readers generally to assist in this 'difficult and responsible' task. Each reader is invited to answer the following questions, which are reproduced in *Bezbojnik* of May 1, 1933 :

'(1) Which books have made the strongest impression on you in destroying the religious mentality and ideas? Try to recall the titles and give them. (2) What particular passages have most shaken your faith or confirmed your atheism? (3) Which anti-religious books failed to convince you while you were a believer? It is not necessary to give your name, but say how old you were and what was your social position when you became anti-religious. Give also your sex and your standard of education. Replies should be sent to the Government Anti-Religious Publications.'

While the Soviet Godless carry on their work energetically within the U.S.S.R., the P.F.I. acts in other countries. After the split of November 15, 1930, this latter organization transferred its headquarters to Berlin. On May 4, 1932, the Government of the Reich dissolved it. Retaining the direction by Moscow, the P.F.I. created branches in Switzerland, France, and Spain. Its organization and activities are more and more merged with those of Moscow atheists, which is what Yaroslavsky had in view when he wrote in 1932 :<sup>2</sup> 'All our work ought to be more closely

<sup>1</sup> *Antireligioznik*, No. 3, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



linked than ever with that of the Proletarian Free-thinkers' International.'

If the cells of this body are scattered throughout the world, they remain none the less strictly dependent on the Comintern. Here is a significant incident. It was the Moscow journal, the *Antireligioznik*, which, in January, 1932, was the first to publish a circular in advance of the Congress of the Executive of the P.F.I. to be held in Paris the following August. This document sets out the following as the programme of the P.F.I. at that time :<sup>1</sup>

' (1) To increase the membership. (2) To publish a bulletin in German, French, English, and Russian. (3) To provide all sections with trained teachers. (4) To begin on March 1, 1932, the publication of an anti-religious Review in German. (5) To organize the publication and wide distribution of cheap propaganda literature, primarily in Great Britain and America, where the Godless movement should be more firmly planted. (6) To organize the showing of anti-religious films. (7) To draw up a precise plan of action for each country. (8) To organize the exchange of information and propaganda material between the various sections. (9) To stimulate a rivalry in revolutionary action.'

By 1930, there was not only the Russian *Bezbojnik*; there were the *Kampfende Gottlosen* in Germany and Austria, the *Militant Godless* in England and America, and the *Sans Dieu* in France, Switzerland, and Belgium. Thus, in one form or another, militant atheist groups were organized nearly all over the world.

In the course of 1932—except in Germany, where the Godless movement became illegal on May 4 of that year—international anti-religious propaganda spread more and more. The P.F.I., which in 1930 had only

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., January, 1932.

eight sections scattered among the various countries, had, at the end of 1932, twenty-four, of which sixteen were in Europe, three in America, three in Asia, and one in Australia.

IV. *U.S.D.M. and P.F.I., from January, 1933, to the Beginning of 1935: Crises and New Offensives.*

Since May, 1932, the U.S.D.M. has not published statistics as it did in the previous years, and the natural conclusion from this silence is that from this date the number of militant Godless has declined. This interpretation, as we shall see, is correct.

In this same month, May, 1932, the circulation of *Bezbojnik* began to drop. At the beginning of the year it had reached 500,000 copies. In 1934 it appeared only three times a month, and with four pages instead of eight as in 1930 and 1931. The Review, *Anti-religioznik*, shows a similar curve. In 1931 it issued 31,000 copies and its monthly edition had 128 pages. In 1932 the number of pages was down to 64, and at the beginning of 1933 its issue was only 20,250 copies. In 1934 it appeared only every other month, and its last issue in that year amounted to only 12,000 copies.<sup>1</sup>

All this is symptomatic of a crisis in militant atheism even within the U.S.S.R. *Bezbojnik* of June 17 and August 10, 1934, admitted anxiety. 'It is necessary,' it wrote, 'to find out whether the anti-religious universities are fulfilling the hopes entertained of them. Do they deserve to be called universities at all? In most cases they are simply bad seminaries.'

At the end of the same year, according to *Bezbojnik* of December 17, 1934: 'During the great celebrations organized by the Militant Godless of Leningrad for the tenth anniversary, it was apparent to everyone

<sup>1</sup> These figures are those of the Rev. Fr. Joseph Ledit, quoted by *L'Ami du Clergé*, May 23, 1935, p. 322.

that enthusiasm and interest in the anti-religious work are not what they were a few years earlier. The cells are weak and inactive and discipline has declined.'

In short, a sort of lassitude had overtaken the converts to atheism, and even the youth displayed a certain distaste for the practice of the anti-religion.

This state of affairs was felt to be serious and as materialist atheism lies at the very foundations of the Soviet system of government, the rulers of the U.S.S.R. were disturbed. Looking round for a remedy, they proposed a new offensive.

In the eyes of Stalin's government, Soviet youth in 1934 was guilty of showing less sacrilegious zeal than in the preceding years, and it is in this direction that Yaroslavsky turned his efforts, with atheist education as his principal weapon. *Bezbojnik* of November 17, 1934, published a letter from the Commissariat of Education to the heads of regional sections attached to his department, aiming at strengthening the anti-religious work in the schools. This communication repeated in detail the instructions given three years earlier :

' (1) Regional, departmental and municipal inspectors making visits to the schools are to pay particular attention to the anti-religious work both in and out of school hours and to give the teachers precise and methodical assistance.

' (2) Regional and departmental Reviews should report local anti-religious work in the schools and mention specially those that show the best results.

' (3) The regional school textbooks should contain at least a fixed minimum of anti-religious matter, varying according to the importance of the book, and it should be in live, clear, and convincing language.

'(4) All steps should be taken to see that the schools are supplied with systematic manuals of anti-religious instruction for the teachers (Moscow editions) and with all the scholastic material laid down by the Commissariat of Education and the Central Council of the Union of Militant Godless.

'(5) The schools should be informed of the obligation to render systematic help to the educational cells of the Union of Militant Godless.'

Other methods of spreading atheism were intensified, such as anti-religious exhibitions, clubs, seminaries, etc. Not only Moscow has its atheist museums, but also Leningrad and Kieff, which organize travelling exhibitions of the anti-religion.

We are entitled, therefore, to conclude with Prince Constantin Gorchacow<sup>1</sup> that, at this period of its existence, 'the Militant Godless movement in the U.S.S.R. lacks initiative. The phase of destructive and blasphemous enthusiasm has passed and a reaction of indifference and feeble interest has set in. . . . But what strikes one even more is the fierce energy with which the Soviet Government, in spite of the passivity of the masses, continues its propaganda and its war on religion.'

In this same year, 1934, the Godless intensified their propaganda in the world at large. From May 6 to 8, a new session of the Executive of the P.F.I. was held in Paris. Its aim was clearly set out in a Comintern organ,<sup>2</sup> as being 'to forge new weapons for the war against the Church and against Fascist barbarism.' For this purpose the proletarian leaders had 'studied the work done since the last Conference and drawn up

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Report of the 4th Session of the International Commission 'Pro Deo.'

<sup>2</sup> *La Correspondance Internationale*, May 26, 1934, p. 859.

a programme of militant atheism' for the future. Here are some of its points as given in *La Correspondance Internationale* of June 23, 1934 (p. 984) :

'The sections of the P.F.I. should penetrate more effectively than hitherto the collective organizations of the Church and of Fascism. In the countries under Fascist dictatorship, the accomplishment of this task is vital to the organizations connected with the fight for atheism. . . .

'The Executive, in a special report, has drawn the attention of the European and American sections to the great importance of mass propaganda in the colonies. Experience of the results achieved by the Indian section of the P.F.I. demonstrates both the extent of the possibilities and the present weakness of the colonial work. . . .

'There are now published by the sections in capitalist countries outside the Soviet Union, fifty-two journals—ten of them illegal—in fourteen languages. This is undoubtedly a real advance, but only in a small number of countries—Germany, France, Bulgaria, India, and Czechoslovakia—has the atheist Press so far developed on a large scale. . . .

'The Executive Committee has decided to call the Fifth World Congress of Proletarian Free-thinkers' International in the first quarter of 1935 and to charge all the sections with the preliminary organization by way of mass action and the promotion of a common anti-clerical and anti-Fascist Front, thus making of the Fifth World Congress a powerful manifestation of militant atheism.'

Some months after the Paris meeting the Godless gained a great victory. On September 18, 1934, a representative of the Soviet Government was officially admitted to the Assembly of the League of Nations, whose Council a few days earlier had voted it a perma-

ment seat. Now a victory for the Soviet Government in international politics is a victory for the Godless in the same field since the U.S.D.M. is an official organ of that Government. Is not its Central Council a sort of 'Ministry of Irreligion,' controlled by one of the highest officers of the State ?<sup>1</sup> M. Motta, speaking to the representatives of the nations on that historic date, September 17, made reference to this disturbing association. 'Above all,' he said, 'when the Soviet delegates present themselves in Geneva, we hope that some voices will be raised to demand in the name of the common conscience of humanity, some explanations from their Government, and to denounce that anti-religious propaganda, to which there is no parallel in the history of the human race, and which has plunged Christendom in tears and mourning, with all those who believe in God and appeal to His justice.'

By the very fact of the entry of Moscow at Geneva, have not the Godless acquired, in the very heart of Europe, a new centre of propaganda ?

*V. In the U.S.S.R., 1935 and 1936: Religious Survivals and Anti-religious Activity.*

On the eve of the Revolution, according to the official statistics, the Russian Orthodox Church numbered 181,337 clerics of various grades,<sup>2</sup> of whom 50,960 were priests. It had 46,457 churches, 21,747 chapels, 497 monasteries, 419 convents, 4 religious colleges—at Kieff, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan—36 seminaries, 40,000 popular schools and 150 schools for the children of the clergy.

<sup>1</sup> Yaroslavsky-Gubelmann is, in fact, a member of the Central Commission.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the 50,960 priests, there were 17,430 monks, 15,210 deacons, 45,705 sacristans, and 52,032 nuns. These figures were published in *Bezbojnik* in January, 1935, and quoted in a report by Dr. Lodyginsky to the Fifth Session of the International Commission 'Pro Deo' at Geneva on September 30 and October 1, 1935.

What remains to-day of these former glories? 'It is impossible to give exact figures, but according to information obtainable,<sup>1</sup> not more than a few hundred Orthodox priests are still officially functioning. Most of the clerics are dead (many martyred) or in concentration camps. Others carry on their work secretly, while following other occupations, or live as travelling priests.'

The buildings are scarcely more respected. It is true that they have not all been demolished, but the hatred of the Godless continues its work of destruction. *Bezbojnik* of May, 1935, in an article entitled: 'We Close the Opium Dens,' published a fresh list of recently commandeered churches.

The centres of religious instruction have been treated with even less ceremony. For a long time there have been no Orthodox schools nor seminaries in the U.S.S.R. while ordinations have to take place, if at all, in secret. The same applies to recruiting and preparation for the Ministry.

The Catholic Church, if less powerful than the Orthodox, was nevertheless flourishing in Russia in 1917. It numbered<sup>2</sup> 13,000,000 faithful, 8 bishops, and 810 priests, owned 614 churches, 581 chapels, and 7 seminaries. It is difficult to estimate the number of Catholics surviving in the U.S.S.R. at the end of 1936 and beginning of 1937. Only the number of priests is known. A communication from the Innitzer Committee<sup>3</sup> indicates that in 1935 there were only 73. Of these, at the beginning of May of that year, 14 were in the convict settlements in the Solowski Islands and 13 others had just been arrested.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Lodygensky, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> According to Robert Kotten in *L'Âme Russe en Détresse* (Liège; La Pensée Catholique), Appendix III. These figures refer to the former Russian territory in which Lithuania, Latvia and Poland were included.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, May 21, 1935.

At Odessa, Father Lorentz Wolf and Father Jean Albert were sentenced to ten years' hard labour while at Landau, also at the beginning of May, 1935, 4 Catholic priests—Fr. Antonie Hopfmann, Fr. Jean Tauberger, Fr. Raphael Lorau, and Fr. Joseph Krushinsky—suffered the same penalty. On January 10, 1936, the *last Catholic priest in Odessa*, Mgr Frison, was arrested and thrown in prison. At the beginning of 1937 not more than ten Catholic priests remained in the U.S.S.R.<sup>1</sup> The two latest to be reported dead at that time were Poles—Fr. Jean Brydycki, of the Dominican Church of Kamieniech Podolski, in South Russia, and Fr. Emmanuel Kaplanowsky, a secular priest of the diocese of Kamieniech.

If a few churches and chapels remain open, there is not a single Catholic seminary which has not been closed down. And, as the hatred of the Godless extends to all forms of Christianity, Protestants are not spared. In 1914, the Evangelical Church of Russia<sup>2</sup> had 1,100,000 members, of whom 230 were pastors, and it owned 800 chapels. To-day, of the 83 surviving pastors in the U.S.S.R., 40 are in concentration camps in Siberia or by the borders of the White Sea; two of them—Pastor Seib and Pastor Deutschmann—have been condemned to death for having 'solicited and accepted foreign assistance for famine victims.'

It is true that, according to a communication made to the Executive of the International Commission 'Pro Deo' on November 9, 1935, the death sentences have been commuted to ten years' deportation. Of the 38 pastors it was said in 1934: 'Only eighteen still exercise their ministry' and all are 'subject to con-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Osservatore Romano*, April 11, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Report of Count Keyserlingk to the Fifth Session of the International Commission 'Pro Deo.'



tinuous persecution.' In 1935 there were only 14, and in February, 1936, only 8.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this fury against Christianity and, indeed, all forms of theism, it is comforting to know that many Christians have remained true to their faith, thus proving themselves to be in truth, worthy upholders of that religion which will survive the decay of the governments upon whom its very life appears to depend.

From the point of view of the militant atheists, there are too many of these witnesses to an outworn civilization, and the command went out from the leaders of Moscow atheism in 1935 that the last traces of religious 'superstition' were to be destroyed. According to *Bezbojnik* in June of that year: 'The great work of the Union of the Militant Godless is to employ shock-tactics in the propaganda against religion, until, by persistent efforts, the last vestiges of the terrible and shameful power of religion are eradicated from the minds of the masses.'

At the Seventh Congress of Soviets, in 1935, Comrade Yaroslavsky-Gubelmann exclaimed:<sup>2</sup> 'Our country . . . severs all links with the past, including the link with religion. Millions of men have already thrown off this terrible yoke. But we cannot stop half-way; we must turn all our energies towards a complete rupture between the workers on the one hand and the Church and religion on the other. . . . We shall oppose remorselessly all those who cross our path. . . .'

In the same year, Comrade Scheinmann, the colleague of Yaroslavsky, declared:<sup>3</sup> 'Our atheism is a militant atheism and that is what distinguishes it from the bourgeois variety. It attacks all the citadels of the

<sup>1</sup> Mitteilungen der deutschen 'Pro Deo' Kommis., 1936, No. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Antireligioznik*, No. 2, March and April, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Bezbojnik*, August, 1935.

old world, including its ideology. For us there can be no peaceful existence alongside of the clergy but only an implacable struggle against religion in order to open the eyes of those workers who still follow the Church. That is our object !' A little later, Scheinmann recalled the order of the day : ' Still more militant spirit, still more anti-religious intolerance.'

In spite of these clear directions, the organs of Moscow atheism themselves recognize a real set-back in the activity of the U.S.D.M. ' In Leningrad, for example,' said *Bezbojnik* of August, 1935, ' a number of converts have abandoned anti-religious propaganda, educational work is neglected, there is not the same zest in the mass movement, and the link with the regional organizations has been weakened. The same state of affairs is reported in the Ukraine. In the regions of Saratov, Stalingrad, and in the North, the work is badly done, and it is the same in nearly all Siberia and in the region of the West.'

What is the reason for this decline ? *Bezbojnik* of August, 1935, once more supplies the answer : ' Many of the . . . regional organizations are lulling themselves with illusions ; they imagine that, so great has been the success of the second Five Year Plan that the class-enemy is vanquished and therefore anti-religious propaganda is no longer necessary. In some regions—in the Caucasus and in the North for example—it has even been proposed to suppress the S.D.M. organizations on the pretext that nobody is religious any longer. In other places the anti-religious work is left to look after itself.'

These are significant admissions ! Do they mean that there is less atheism in the U.S.S.R. ? Not in the least. If it is less noisy, the anti-religious fight is no less determined and it is even making progress. The Conference of the U.S.D.M. held at Moscow in the summer of 1935, after recording a considerable drop in

the number of cells and in the membership of the organization, also placed it on record that 'atheism is spreading more than ever among the masses in town and country.'

Nevertheless, the Central Council of the U.S.D.M. has taken steps to recover the lost ground. The staffs have been purged and strengthened on the ground that, according to the Report of the Conference of Godless,<sup>1</sup> 'they completely fail to meet the needs of the time. They are too uncertain from the political standpoint and, in a whole series of anti-religious organizations, in Leningrad, Eastern Siberia, and the Ukraine, the principal part is played by Trotskyists.'

The Central Council of the U.S.D.M. in fact goes further; it demands that all sections of the Union should keep an eye on the workers on the anti-religious front.

In the autumn of 1935, the Central Council of the S.D.M. was ordered<sup>2</sup> 'to get all the workers of the U.S.D.M. together in order to follow courses of study and thus increase their output. In the towns, lecture-ships should be instituted in order to educate the local workers. The S.D.M. Councils are asked to keep a closer eye on converts to anti-religion. All the atheists of the better type who, for various reasons, have retired from the work in the last few years should be recalled to it.'

Are not these measures entirely consistent with the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bezbojnik*, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Bezbojnik*, loc. cit. Here are the subjects proposed for the course of the Regional Council of the S.D.M. of Leningrad for 1935-36: (1) Marx-Leninist doctrine on religion and the anti-religious struggle; (2) Present state of religious organization and the proletarian anti-religious movement in capitalist countries; (3) Building-up of a classless Socialist Order, Socialist re-education and the struggle against religion; (4) Socialist reconstruction of agriculture and the fight against religion; (5) Scientific subjects (anti-Darwinism and Fascist racial theories, causes of eclipses, science, religion, and human conduct, how we create new plant and animal species, etc.); (6) History of Atheism; (7) History of religion.

decrees of the anti-religious Five Year Plan? The third year, in this scheme, was to be devoted to 'increasing the activity of the Godless cells.' We need not be surprised therefore at this offensive.

We may conclude our study of conditions in 1935 with these lines from a Report<sup>1</sup> of the Executive of the International Commission 'Pro Deo':

'A slight relaxation in the control of the Godless movement was sufficient to produce a considerable weakening of the whole organization, thus showing its artificial character. So far from having dug its roots deep in among the masses of the people, anti-religion is rejected by them as soon as the pressure from above is relaxed. But the determination of the Communist chiefs . . . to proceed to the extermination of religion remains unshakable. In face of the weakening, one might say the partial failure, of their anti-religious organizations they return to the task, rally their followers, seek new resources and appeal for official support. In short, they renew the offensive.'

Within the U.S.S.R., however, in the course of 1935 and particularly at the beginning of 1936, the Moscow leaders conducted their anti-religious struggle with increasing secrecy, but if it was more sly, it was not less perverse. Yaroslavsky did not fail to call to order those Communists who, in their work for Socialism, regarded the fight against religion as a work already completed. Here are his views on this subject, given in the *Komсомolskaia Pravda* of March 10, 1936:

'How can the Party organizations in the Northern Province have persuaded themselves that our work is done in the fight against religion? Let them

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Report presented to the fifth session of the International Commission 'Pro Deo.'

re-read the Party programme. They will find it clearly stated that the Party . . . helps in the emancipation of the workers from all religious prejudices, by *organizing the broadest, most scientific and educational anti-religious propaganda*. (I italicize these words—E. Yaroslavsky.) Has this programme been turned down? If so, when? At what Congress and in what resolution was it repealed? Where is there the slightest indication that this work set before the Party and the Komsomol has been already accomplished?

‘Those who say such things . . . forget the words of Lenin: *Our propaganda necessarily includes the spread of atheism*. And Comrade Stalin has said: “There are cases of members of the Party impeding the development of anti-religious propaganda. Communists of that sort have no place in our ranks.”

‘What, as a matter of fact, has already been accomplished is a certain phase of our work. There were some methods of struggle which belonged to the stormy period when we had to destroy the past. The work that has not yet been done is . . . the creation of the atheist mentality among the tens of millions of workers in town and field, the struggle against the influence of ecclesiastical or sectarian organizations on those workers and peasants who are still slaves to religion. . . .

‘The Communist Party has always recommended caution in anti-religious propaganda and at present, above all, we do not want open assaults, but a deep, insistent and patient method.’

Whatever exaggeration there may be in some of the figures given by the Moscow Press, the balance sheet of the anti-religious movement published on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Union of Militant Godless shows that the struggle

against religion is still active. According to *Pravda* of February 8, 1936, among agricultural workers alone, the U.S.D.M. then had 50,000 cells and about two million 'militant youth.' Each year more than thirty anti-religious museums have been established and more than 10,000 lectures, discussions, etc., arranged. In 1935—we are still quoting *Pravda* of February 8, 1936—in the Ukraine alone the number of anti-religious lectures was no less than 5,775. The atheist publishing houses of the U.S.S.R. publish each year up to eighty new 'scientific' books against religion, besides periodicals and pamphlets.

In spite of appearances, the new Soviet Constitution, voted on December 2, 1936, is even more sectarian than the earlier ones. According to Article 124: 'Freedom of religious worship and of anti-religious propaganda are extended to all citizens.' In other words, there is for the religious, freedom of worship or toleration, but no right of propaganda. For the anti-religious there is freedom to abstain from worship and also to carry on propaganda. Now, in the first years of the Communist regime in Russia, freedom of religious propaganda was permitted by the Constitution. It is true that this was suppressed by the decree of April 28, 1929, and that several republics framed their constitutions in accordance with this decree. Some, however (e.g. White Russia, Georgia, and Armenia), continued to authorize religious propaganda *constitutionally*. To-day, these republics have no such liberty. No doubt it was purely verbal before, but it is an illusion to suppose that a greater religious liberty was given by the new Soviet Constitution of 1936.



PART TWO

THE COMMUNIST ANTI-RELIGION OUTSIDE  
THE U.S.S.R. (1935-1936)

' Revolution, victorious in one country, has for its essential task, to promote and support revolution in the others.'

J. Stalin : *Leninism, Theoretical and Practical*.





## CHAPTER I

### FROM ANTI-RELIGION TO ANTI-FASCISM

Magnetism of words and new tactics—Anti-Fascism—The Popular Front—The Prague Congress (April, 1936).

' It is possible to conquer this most powerful enemy only by . . . taking advantage of every possibility, however small, of gaining an ally among the masses, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this do not understand even a grain of Marxism and of scientific modern Socialism in general.'<sup>1</sup> (Lenin: *Left Wing Communism*.)

#### *I. The Magnetism of Words and New Tactics.*

MEANWHILE, with the threat of a new world-war and the growing success and consolidation of 'Fascism' in Europe, the moving spirits of the Third International, in their action outside the U.S.S.R., gradually replaced their old tactics with new ones. Among these, or rather side by side with them and varying with them, were the slogans from Moscow. These were all the more insidious on account of the element of truth mingled with their errors. The Communist chiefs are well aware that the popular mind is not given to logical reasoning. It is swayed by the magnetism of certain formulas which appeal direct to its instincts, and, without analysing them from the standpoint of their abstract truth or error, it allows them to sink in until they become principles of action. Sometimes, indeed, the effect is one of intoxication,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by M. Thorez in *L'Union de la Nation Française*, Report presented to the Eighth Congress of the French Communist Party, January 22-25, 1936.

and these formulas have the effect of a clarion call to battle.

The Communist leaders know how to vary their watchwords according to the particular preoccupations of their hearers at the time. If the masses are troubled by the danger of war, the slogan will be 'Peace,' or 'Fight against war and Fascism.' When the fear is that the economic crisis will become worse or human freedom be curtailed by some totalitarian State other than the Soviet Republics, the cry is: 'For Bread and Liberty.' If the defeat of the Popular Front in Spain arouses misgivings, the provisional pseudo-pacifism gives place to a war-like enthusiasm and it is: 'Arms for Spain!'

By these magic words, circulated by radio, newspapers, posters, the cinema and books, the masses are attracted and the membership of the Party increased tenfold.

All the time, however, the leaders of the Third International, working outside Russia, are strictly dependent on Moscow. Their aim is always the same—'The violent overthrow of the whole traditional social order.' Always they aim at the suppression of whatever impedes revolutionary progress. They fight religion to the extent that it is still alive, but—apart from Mexico, Spain, Uruguay, and Brazil, where the Communist action is still to some extent modelled on that of Moscow between 1929 and 1932—anti-religious propaganda outside Russia becomes less direct and avoids shocking popular religious sentiment where it still exists. The Communist leaders appear to have grasped the fact that violent and aggressive methods are liable to defeat their purpose unless they enjoy the protection of a materialist and atheist dictatorship of the proletariat. Outside the U.S.S.R. Communist action is increasingly disguised with a pseudo-pacifist label. The war-cry will be: 'Let us fight against

war and Fascism.' But as an acute observer has well said :<sup>1</sup> ' They do not forget to add that the upholders of religion are also the upholders of Fascism and war. They call this fighting the religious as well as the Fascist form of capitalist ideology, or creating a united anti-Christian and anti-Fascist front.' From this point anti-religion is merged in anti-Fascism.

## II. *Anti-Fascism.*

It is true that in law and in fact, *there is no necessary link* between religion and Fascism. Christians, Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox, may be anti-Fascist and, in France particularly, there are many souls as deeply Christian as they are anti-Fascist. Nevertheless, the world-wide movement by Moscow under the label of ' Anti-Fascism ' must not be regarded as independent of the anti-religious movement.

According to the misleading Communist conception, ' Fascism ' is not only the ideology of Mussolini, Hitler, and of the Patriotic Leagues, but also capitalism, religion, and especially Catholicism. By a false notion of Christianity the Communist leaders regard it as an integral part of Fascist ideology as well as of the capitalist ideology against which they fight. Beneath the deceptive exterior of their appeals to resist ' Fascism ' and to contend ' for peace and liberty,' there is concealed a poison fatal to religion and capable, if successful, of banishing the very idea of God from the popular mind.

In the Communist interpretation again, ' Fascism ' means war, since all anti-Communist ideologies are held to be anti-pacifist. Moreover, the disciples of Lenin are the only friends of the working class, the sole defenders of peace. They proclaim on the house-

<sup>1</sup> *Informations Internationales*, February, 1935, quoted by Fr. Archambault in : *La Menace du Communisme au Canada* (Montreal, L'Ecole Sociale Populaire, 1935), p. 57

tops that the Church is the ally of capitalism, and the Holy Father 'the Pope of the big capitalists.' They go so far as to pretend that the Vatican supports imperialist wars and even that it is<sup>1</sup> 'taking part officially in the Spanish civil war in favour of the Fascist generals.'

### *III. The Popular Front.*

The first step in this war against 'Fascism' is the setting up of a world-wide anti-Fascist 'Popular Front.' In the plan of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, submitted to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International at Moscow from July 25 to August 20, 1935, it was laid down that a threefold process should lead the Soviets to power in capitalist countries: the setting up of a 'Popular Front,' the electoral success of this front, and finally the revolutionary strike.

The instructions of Moscow have been faithfully followed. During 1935, an immense anti-Fascist Popular Front was formed and developed in most of the countries in which Communist propaganda is still tolerated. It comprises not only the Second and Third Internationals (United Front), but all 'anti-Fascist' organizations and parties. By increasing its public activities in the great capitals, it displayed its growing strength, and finally, by electoral methods, it achieved power successively in Spain and France. Throughout the world it is led by the Communist Party, in the front rank of which are the atheists of the U.S.S.R.<sup>2</sup>

### *IV. The Prague Congress (April, 1936).*

It was in the spirit of unity against 'Fascism' that a Congress of the Godless was held at Prague from

<sup>1</sup> *La Correspondance Internationale*, September 19, 1936, p. 1192.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Antireligioznik*, September-October, 1935.

April 10 to 14, 1936. The two Internationals—those of the Radical-Socialist Freethinkers and of the Proletarian Freethinkers—were represented. As early as January 8 of that year, there had been negotiations at Brussels between the representatives of these two great atheist organizations. According to their own account, they had discussed ‘possibilities of co-operation in the fight against Fascist and clerical reaction,’<sup>1</sup> and they agreed ‘with complete unanimity, not only that there was a possibility of limited co-operation for certain definite objects, but all the conditions necessary for the amalgamation of the two Internationals in a single organization.’ All preparations were therefore made in order that the Prague Conference might seal the reunion of the Moscow Godless with the Radical-Socialist Freethinkers from whom they had violently separated at Bodenbach on November 15, 1930.

On April 9, 1936, a deputation from the Congress was received by M. Benesh,<sup>2</sup> and on that day the respective Executive Committees of the two Internationals met in the Czechoslovak capital. The Congress was formally opened at 3 p.m. on April 11. The Soviet delegation, which arrived a few minutes late, was the object of an enthusiastic ovation. Dr. Terwague, a Belgian delegate, gave the inaugural address, and his opening words are very illuminating on the sympathies of the President of the United Freethinkers’ International :

‘I welcome the eminent President of the Czechoslovak Republic, M. Benesh. He has held out one hand symbolically to France, the great Republic of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the torch that lighted humanity in its darkest days, and the other

<sup>1</sup> *La Correspondance Internationale*, February 15, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> For the Prague Congress cf. *Antireligioznik*, Nos. 3 and 4, 1936, a summary of which appeared in France in Bulletin E.I.A., No. 13 of November, 1936.

to the U.S.S.R., the herald of a new age and the repository of all our hopes. I wish also to express my gratitude to the Municipality of Prague which has accorded us hospitality.'

Dr. Terwague proceeded to indict Fascism and declared that 'salvation lies in the spread of science' (materialist science, of course), 'and in the course of recent years, two countries have completely done their duty in this respect, the U.S.S.R., where science and education' (again we must read materialist science and anti-religious education) 'have attained a glorious success, and the Spanish Republic.'

Dr. Terwague was followed by Captain Voska, who spoke on behalf of the Czech organization 'Volna myslenska,' and then Comrade Lukachevsky, the present vice-president of the U.S.D.M. united to the P.F.I., mounted the tribune. His speech, which was enthusiastically applauded, was even more definite than that of Dr. Terwague.

'In the name of the U.S.D.M.,' cried Comrade Lukachevsky, 'in the name of thousands of fighters in the vanguard of the great struggle for Socialism and the liberation of humanity from the yoke of religion, our delegation gives a fraternal welcome to the historic Congress of the two Freethinkers' Internationals. We bring warm greetings from a land in which Socialism has become a reality, the Socialism that destroys classes, ends exploitation, and frees men from the domination of religion. Where should we look to-day for freethinkers ready to fight against religious prejudice, against the power of clericalism in all its forms? Their place is in the ranks of the united Popular Front against Fascism and war.

'Why should we separate from one another in our work when our interests and our struggle are the

same ? The more we are united the stronger we shall be. Long live the Union of Freethinkers of the world.'

Here are the titles of some of the papers which were read after Lukachevsky's speech on April 11 and the two following days :

'The Question of Secular Ethics,' by Climat, of the University of Paris ; 'Reforms in Education and the Educational Laws,' by the Belgian writer, Striveau, and the secularist schoolmaster Gorry ; 'The School and Religion in Czechoslovakia,' by Churda-Lipovsky ; 'The International Policy of the Vatican,' by Comrade Chervinka ; 'The Persecution of the Jews,' by Dr. Goving ; 'The Activity of the U.S.D.M.,' by G. Lukachevsky ; 'Youth and Freethought,' by Comrades Brek and Meisner (Czechoslovakia) and Bradlaugh Bonner (England) ; 'The United Front against Fascism and War,' by Dr. Milde (Czechoslovakia), Messrs. Galpéric and Jansen (France) ; 'Science and Religion in the U.S.S.R.,' by Comrade Zavadvovsky.

On April 1 the Congress had decided to unite the two Freethinkers' Internationals. Dr. Terwague was elected President of the united body and Comrade Lukachevsky, Vice-President. Brussels was selected as the headquarters of this powerful organization, so that Belgium, which up to the present has not had much experience of the action of the Godless, may expect to be intensively 'worked' as Germany was before 1932, and as France and Spain are to-day. The new Communist centre in Brussels is closely connected with Moscow since the United Freethinkers' International, like all the auxiliary internationals, receives its orders from the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Thus Moscow is installed in Brussels in order to spread the Communist anti-religion.



Resolutions of the Congress dealt *inter alia* with: 'Unity of action against Fascist Barbarism,' 'Creation of Lay Schools,' 'Work among the Young,' 'Necessity of Proving to the Masses the Falsity of Beliefs based on the Recognition of a Supernatural Force and the Fear of a Superior Being' (*sic*).

The Congress was summed up by Comrade Lukachevsky.<sup>1</sup> He emphasized the considerable political importance of the Union of the two Godless internationals. 'In the light of the resolutions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern,' he said, 'the United International is reorganized and bases its work at the present stage on the union of all the freethought organizations and the creation of a secularist International for the defence of culture and progress.' Again, of course, he means anti-religious Communist culture and material progress.

'The fundamental task of the International,' he went on, 'is the fierce and implacable struggle against Fascism and denunciation of the Church and of religion as the agents of Fascism and imperialism. . . . It is equally necessary to work for the setting up of new organizations in the countries where they do not yet exist, in the Scandinavian countries and the Near East. . . . The Godless of the U.S.S.R. welcome joyfully the creation of the United International, and their task will be to help it to bring about the unity of world atheism.'

Thus it is a great anti-religious front, which, like a rising tide, seeks to overwhelm Christian civilization. 'This is no time for divisions among freethinkers,' wrote Romain Rolland to the Congress. 'The Fascist hydra seeks to strangle us all and we cannot rest until all its heads are off. We must be united.'

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Antireligioznik*, No. 4, 1936.

## CHAPTER II

### FRANCE IN 1934 AND 1935: FORMATION OF THE POPULAR FRONT (FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE ESTAB- LISHMENT OF THE COMMUNIST ANTI-RELIGION)

Ideological origin of the Popular Front—Beginning of the Single Front—The Common Front—The Unity Pact—The Popular Front.

‘In the mobilization of the masses of the workers for the struggle against Fascism, it is particularly important to create a broad anti-Fascist Popular Front.’ (G. Dimitrov: Report presented on August 2, 1935, to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International.)

#### *I. Ideological Origin of the Popular Front.*

ACCORDING to Marxian morality all means are good which lead to the seizing of power by the Soviets and the establishment of a classless society. Communists, in fact, recognize ‘no other ethic than the choice of the best tactical means for bringing the struggle to a successful conclusion.’ In other words, Communist morality is ‘entirely subordinated to the interest of the proletariat in the class war.’<sup>1</sup>

From the winter of 1934 the leaders of the French Communist Party seem to have become increasingly conscious that in Lenin’s words: ‘It is possible to conquer this most powerful enemy only by taking advantage of every possibility, however small, of gaining an ally among the masses, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lenin: *De la Religion* (Paris, 1933), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin: *Left Wing Communism*, loc. cit.

The activities of the Party have therefore been entirely absorbed by the effort to unite the working class against 'Fascism.' The anti-religious war has not been abandoned, but carried on in a less direct manner under the vague label of a struggle against 'Fascism.' There is no change of doctrines, only of tactics, and the activities of the Godless, if more often camouflaged, are none the less deceitful. On May 27, 1932, two revolutionary writers, Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland launched the idea among the intellectuals of the Third International that there should be a great international rally against war and for the defence of the Russian Revolution. The Popular Front had its birth in this idea and, Communist in its ideological beginnings, it has remained under the influence of the Comintern from the commencement down to our own times. As its constitution states: 'It is neither a party nor a super-party, but a centre of unity for organizations and groups which, while retaining their autonomy, are united for common action with a view to the co-ordination of the anti-Fascist forces.'

## *II. Beginnings of the Single Front.*

The first steps in this 'international rally against war' were taken at the Amsterdam Congress on August 27, 28, and 29, 1932, when 2200 delegates met, representing 30,000,000 men from 29 nations. The French delegates numbered 527 of whom 200 came from the Communist Trade Unions, 15 from the Confédération Générale du Travail, 40 peasants, 15 co-operators, 33 from the working class municipalities and more than 20 from the French Socialist Party. The declarations of the Socialists were very clear. 'The comrade members of the Second International, numbering 291 delegates of various organizations at the Rolland-Barbusse Congress on August 27,

28, and 29, regret the absence of the leaders of the Second International from this historic international manifestation and resolve to work zealously for the triumph within their respective sections of the Single Front against war and for the defence of the Russian Revolution. . . . They consider that war can be made impossible only by the overthrow of Capitalism. They renounce all idea of national defence under a Capitalist regime, and if the efforts of the united proletariat fail to prevent Imperialist war, they pledge themselves to take all steps to turn it into a class struggle for the seizure of power by the workers and peasants.'

This brought the Amsterdam movement into existence and laid the foundation stones of the Single Front (union of Communists and Socialists), which contained the seeds of the Popular Front. Its development, though rapid, was not without difficulties. At the session of September 7, 1932, the Permanent Administrative Commission of the Socialist Party 'thought it necessary to warn comrades that their adherence to the permanent organizations created at Amsterdam would inevitably provoke legitimate sanctions, and it invited the Federations to be stern and watchful in this respect.'<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this reaction of the Socialist leaders, the idea set on foot by Barbusse and Romain Rolland made headway, not only among the Communist intellectuals, but among the working masses. On June 4, 5, and 6, 1933, the Second Amsterdam Congress was held in Paris at the Salle Pleyel. Henceforth the movement was known as the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement. A good many Socialists attended and once more the Party leaders reacted. Punitive measures were taken and the Socialists who had joined the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Populaire* of September 8, 1932, quoted in *Cahiers du Bolchevisme* of October 1, 1935.

Amsterdam-Pleyel movement were expelled from the Party.

### *III. The Common Front.*

Meanwhile, from March, 1933, 'Messrs. Langevin Bernard Lecache, Georges Monnet, and Gaston Bergery decided to establish in France a great anti-Capitalist and anti-Fascist Front under the title of Common Front. They appealed to the workmen, agricultural labourers, civil servants, employees, mechanics, intellectuals, small *rentiers*, small shopkeepers, to women and to youths without distinction of Party or of Trade Union organization, since they had no intention of superseding the parties and the unions in their own specific work.'<sup>1</sup>

While a certain number of the most eminent members of the Common Front were also in the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement, the two organizations were distinct. This is how M. Gaston Bergery described the situation in *Monde* of June 10, 1933: 'It is true that the two organizations are not divided either in aim or in principle, since both consider Fascism to be the ultimate development of Capitalism, when it is no longer able to trust "its" Parliament and "its" democracy. Both hold that it is impossible to fight Fascism and its deceptions except in struggling to build up Socialism. Both consider, I think, that the maintenance of bourgeois "democracy" can never be an end in itself, and that what is left of so-called democratic liberties should be defended, not to support the regime, but for its overthrow.

'Both organizations proclaim the necessity of uniting, not only the Socialist and Communist masses

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Documentation Catholique*, July 4 to 11, 1936, column 83. For the remainder of this chapter on the Popular Front we have made considerable use of the documents collated by M. T. Ferlé in columns 81 to 115 of this volume.

in this struggle, but also of gathering round the proletariat, the strata, so important in France, of the urban and rural lower middle class who are in process of being "proletarianized."

'But if there is this agreement in theory, there is a real and appreciable difference on the best tactics to employ to attain the goal.'

In spite of this real difference between the Common Front and the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement, both pave the way for the Popular Front. Both are 'anti-Fascist' in the Communist sense of the word. Both, therefore, are anti-religious Fronts which, concealing their ultimate object, rise up against Capitalist society and therefore against the Church, which they regard as an integral part of that society. The first manifesto of the Common Front,<sup>1</sup> though artfully worded, does not conceal the sectarian programme. Among the tasks it sets itself is, in the words of the manifesto, 'the struggle against the utilization of religion by Fascism, and of Fascism by religion, against the poisoning of youth by an education, often Fascist in its tendency, in the free and provided schools; a struggle against the churches inasmuch as they present themselves as essential bulwarks of the Capitalist system; struggle for control of education.'

Nevertheless, until the end of 1933, the Socialist leaders were officially opposed to union with the Communist Party. It was not until February 6, 1934, that a change took place. On that day, henceforward historic, the Socialist Party addressed to the Communist Party and to the C.G.T.U.<sup>2</sup> the following appeal:

'Comrades,

'The Fascist forces are now at large with a boldness which increases from day to day. The liberties

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Monde*, June 3, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Communist Trades Union Congress—*Translator*.

of the working class are threatened and it is no time for divisions. All proletarian organizations should join hands to form an invincible barrier to the Fascist peril. We invite you to discuss with us the basis of an agreement in order to realize the united action of the workers.'

On February 7, the Socialist Party issued a new appeal in the *Populaire* :

'The Socialist Party and its federations in the districts of Seine and Seine-et-Oise, faced with the attempt of the Fascist reactionaries to seize power in order to destroy public and working-class liberties, invite you to a great demonstration to take place to-morrow, Thursday, at 7 o'clock in the Place de la Bastille.

'The whole working-class world should be represented at this demonstration and during to-day we shall do our utmost to secure a friendly understanding between all the proletarian organizations—the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the C.G.T., and the C.G.T.U.

'A truce to differences. The times demand a complete agreement if we are to sweep away the forces of Fascist reaction.'

The Communist Party and its Trade Union organization refused to join with the Socialists. Nevertheless, on the afternoon of April 12 the Paris public saw Socialists and Communists marching through the streets of the capital in a single procession and shouting the same cry : 'Unity ! United action !'

At the National Conference of the Communist Party which was held at Ivry from June 23 to 26, 1934, M. Thorez announced publicly the immediate tasks of his party, or in other words the orders from Moscow :<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Le Triomphe du Front Populaire*, introduction by Jacques Duclos (Paris, Publications révolutionnaires, 1935), pp. 8 and 9.

'We must *at all costs* achieve unity of action with the Socialist workers against Fascism. *At all costs* we must attain Trade Union unity in a single federation. Recognizing the unity of the proletariat, organizing a single battle-front, working for a united workers' federation, we recognize that all this is not enough. We must have side by side with the proletarians, who are the most experienced, ardent, and aggressive fighters against Fascism, and of whom some are already fighting under the Soviet banner, the middle class also, who must be drawn away from Fascist demagoguery.'

#### *IV. The Unity Pact.*

On July 27, 1934, the delegates of the Communist and the Socialist parties met at the co-operative headquarters to sign the Agreement for Unity of Action. Messrs. M. Thorez, Gitton, Jacques Duclos, Soupé, and Martel represented the Communist Party, and Messrs. Séverac, Lebas, Lagorgette, Descoutieux, Just, Blum, and Zyromski the Socialist Party. This is the text of the Agreement :<sup>1</sup>

'The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Permanent Administrative Commission of the Socialist Party are resolved to fight against Fascism.

'This end clearly can only be attained by the combined action of the working masses for well-defined objects. The interest of the working class therefore demands that the Socialist and Communist Parties should organize a common action against Fascism.

'Faced with the danger which Fascism presents to the working population, the organized assaults by armed bands against the proletariat, the Communist and Socialist Parties recognize the necessity of a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *L'Humanité*, July 28, 1934.



determined and precise action carried out mutually in the following manner and under the following conditions :

' (1) The Socialist Party and the Communist Party undertake in this Agreement for Unity of Action to organize in common and to support with all the means at their disposal—organizations, press, propagandists, elected representatives, etc.—a campaign throughout the country with the object of :

- (a) Mobilizing the whole working population against the Fascist organizations and demanding their disarmament and dissolution ;
- (b) Defending democratic liberties and securing proportional representation and the dissolution of the Chamber ;
- (c) Opposing preparations for war ;
- (d) Resisting the orders in council ;<sup>1</sup>
- (e) Opposing the Fascist terror in Germany and Austria, and demanding the liberation of Thaelmann, Karl Seitz, and all imprisoned anti-Fascists.

' (2) This campaign shall be carried on by means of public meetings in as many localities and workshops as possible, by mass demonstrations and counter-demonstrations in the streets, by the defence of working class meetings and those taking part in them, and by a continuous attention to all the conditions, psychological, material, and moral, to ensure the maximum effect.

' The campaign against the orders in council shall be carried out on moderate lines (meetings and demonstrations), but also by methods of agitation and organization likely to lead to resistance on a large scale to these orders.

<sup>1</sup> *Décrets-lois*, to which Orders-in-Council are the nearest English equivalent.—*Translator*.

' If in the course of this common action members of either Party find themselves at grips with Fascist enemies, the supporters of the other Party will lend them aid and assistance.

' (3) In the course of this common action, the two Parties will abstain from attacks and criticisms directed against any organizations or individuals who are loyally taking part in it.

' Each Party, however, outside the limits of united action, will retain its complete independence in order to carry on propaganda while respecting the other, and will recruit members for its own ranks. United demonstrations shall be devoted to the common object and shall not be turned into controversies on the doctrine or tactics of the two Parties.

' (4) Each Party undertakes to deal with any departures within its own ranks from the spirit of these undertakings. A co-ordinating Committee, consisting of seven delegates from each Party, will draw up the plans and make arrangements for the united demonstrations. This Committee shall be informed of any differences or disputes that may arise and its decisions shall be embodied in a statement to be mutually agreed and laid before the workers.'

With the Single Front thus achieved, all the activities of the Communist Party leaders were now turned to the constitution of the Popular Front. From July 27, 1934, demonstrations, assemblies, meetings and conferences were held in increasing numbers. On Sunday, July 29, a great Socialist-Communist demonstration was held at the Panthéon to celebrate 'under the double sign of Jaurès and Lenin' the alliance of the two Parties.

*V. The Popular Front.*

On October 9, 1934, exactly two days after the first ballot in the cantonal elections, the Communist Party submitted to the Socialists the proposal for a Popular Front. On the following day a great meeting was held in Paris in the Salle Bullier. M. Maurice Thorez, speaking on behalf of the Central Committee of his Party, declared that all the Communists were ready to carry out a Popular Front programme and to fight 'in harmony with all those who are prepared to give first place to the defence of the interests of the working masses in town and field.'

On November 24 the political executive of the French Communist Party addressed to the National Council of the Socialist Party a proposal for a Popular Front programme, for which these lines may be quoted : 'In this Front there should be united for the struggle the mass of the workers of all kinds, town workers, civil servants, unemployed, peasants, small shopkeepers and artisans, ex-soldiers, intellectuals, men, women and young people.'

The Socialist Party replied with counter proposals, in which the idea of a Popular Front was rejected, but this did not discourage the French Section of the Third International. On December 20, M. Thorez at a meeting of the Communists of the Paris region made a new appeal to the Socialists, in which he said : 'We have already worked hard and achieved appreciable results, but we remain weak and it is no use deceiving ourselves. There are still hundreds of thousands of proletarians and small middle-class people who remain outside the main current of the movement. . . . We must make a united appeal to revolutionary struggle and action. Let us join together to set up Single Front Committees on a broader basis and Popular Front Committees, not hesitating to call

on those who still remain attached to bourgeois organizations.'

The Communist Party was not wasting its time. More and more the working masses were intoxicated by the doctrine of unity. On January 1, 15,000 people met in the Salle Bullier in Paris, representing not only the Socialist and Communist Parties, but a varied collection of organizations of the Left, such as the League of the Rights of Man, the Radical Federation of the Seine, the Camille Pelletan Party, the representatives of the C.G.T.U., of the Confederated Regional Union and the Committee of anti-Fascist Intellectuals.

This day remains memorable in the annals of the Popular Front, for henceforth there were scarcely to be any obstacles to the carrying out of the Barbusse idea. The Communist Party—which numbered 71,000 on July 1, 1935—was to display such activity that within six months it could mobilize all the Parties of the Left and impose upon them a programme approved by itself. In the municipal elections of May 5 and 12, 1935, the Communists withdrew their candidates from the second ballot, just as they had done at the cantonal elections of 1934, and their success was beyond their expectations. Between the two events there were great Popular Front processions. On February 10, 1935, 100,000 men marched past the statue of the Republic in Paris. On May 24, 200,000 took part in the demonstration at the Mur des Fédérés.

At the Central Committee of the Communist Party on June 1 and 2, M. Thorez gloated over the fact that he had not only brought about the Single Front, but had 'carried to victory the conception of a Popular Front.' A few days later, from June 9 to 12, the Socialist Congress at Mulhouse 'resolved to work more persistently than ever to bring about the organic unity of the working class since the working masses, the peasants, and the threatened or ruined middle-class

could achieve their maximum of efficiency only in a unified party.'

The first foundations of the Popular Front had been laid in August, 1932, by the Amsterdam movement. On June 17, 1935, the same movement, now known as the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement, took the initiative for the great 'anti-Fascist' demonstration to be held on July 14. A Committee of Popular Union was formed under the Presidency of M. Victor Basch, President of the League of the Rights of Man, who issued 'to the people of France' an appeal described as a 'call to action.' The idea was favourably received by all the great parties, Trades Unions and organizations of the Left and even the Radical-Socialist Party joined in. Thus the Popular Front was constituted on July 14, 1935.

In the morning of that historic day, the Popular Front held its first meeting at the Velodrome Buffalo at Montrouge. It was described as 'a session for peace and liberty.' Nearly 10,000 representatives of different organizations attached to the Popular Front took part, and from a platform draped with tricolours and red flags a number of revolutionary speeches were made. Successive orators hailed proletarian unity, and the last of them, M. Rabaté, General Secretary of the Popular Union, administered the solemn oath 'to remain united for the disarmament and dissolution of the seditious leagues, to defend and develop democratic liberty and to assure peace.' At these words a unanimous shout went up from thousands of throats: 'We swear!'

In the afternoon of that same July 14 an unending 'Popular Front' procession marched from the Place de la Bastille to the Porte de Vincennes. As at the morning meeting the red flag and the tricolour were side by side, and the crowd, waving banners and ribbons, mingled the strains of the *Marseillaise* with those of the *Internationale*.

## CHAPTER III

### FRANCE FROM JULY, 1935, TO MAY, 1936: THE POPULAR FRONT IN POWER (SECOND STEP TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMUNIST ANTI-RELIGION)

Activity of the French Communist Party—Electoral success and programme of the Popular Front—Instructions of Dimitrov for the establishment of Soviets in France.

‘ We know that a situation may arise in which the creation of a proletarian Single Front or an anti-Fascist Popular Front may become not only possible but necessary in the interest of the proletariat, and in that case, we shall act without any hesitation for the creation of such a government.’ (Dimitrov, General Secretary of the Communist International: Report presented on August 2, 1935, to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International.)

#### *I. Activity of the French Communist Party.*

THE first step aiming at the establishment of Soviets in power in France had been taken with the formation of the Popular Front, and the French Communist Party, drunk with success, embarked on a more ambitious effort of penetration. At the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in Moscow from July 25 to August 20, 1935, M. Thorez, quoting from the *République* of July 21 of that year, described the tactics to be employed. ‘ They are simple,’ he said, ‘ but there is no doubt that they exercise a very strong attraction. Communists set themselves systematically to exploit discontent. Wherever a malcontent appears, the Communists say to him: “ Comrade, the Communists are on your side ! ” If a decree is issued which affects the civil servants the Communists are on the spot. They are everywhere,

defending the peasants, the farmers, the tenants. And as everybody is discontented in France, the Communists have become the universal spokesmen.'

This method is applied in the most varied fields, in the Press, in speeches at big meetings, in literature, and through the cinema and radio. The disciples of Lenin do not forget the oft-quoted maxim of their master: 'Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.'<sup>1</sup> They take advantage of the liberty allowed them to spread Muscovite literature throughout the whole of France. The former publishing house in the Faubourg Saint-Denis, moved some months ago to 4 Rue St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, provides a varied selection of pamphlets aiming at 'perfecting a knowledge of Marxism.' These are sold at a price which makes them available to those of the most modest means. The various series continually add to their volumes. One of these collections, entitled 'Elements of Communism,' gives the reader miscellaneous extracts from the theorists of Bolshevism, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. A 'Little Lenin Library' deals mainly with historical subjects such as the Commune of Paris, the Russian Revolution of 1905, the October Revolution, etc. There are also the Pamphlets of Proletarian Counter-Education, the Young Proletarian Library and various periodicals such as *Commune*, *Dossiers de L'Agitateur*, *Cahiers du Bolchevisme* (a bi-monthly review, published by the Central Committee of the French Communist Party), the *Internationale Communiste* (a bi-monthly publication of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, which appears in French, Russian, German, English, Spanish and Chinese), *Correspondance Internationale* (a bi-weekly compiled by Communists living in various European and American capitals), *L'Avant-Garde* (a weekly for young people), etc. This gives some idea

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lenin, *Œuvres Complètes*, Vol. IV, 'Que Faire,' p. 432.

of the advance made on the Leninist ideological front in France in recent years. Moreover, in addition to these periodicals, the Press, which is at the orders of the Third International, has developed remarkably. At the end of 1935, *Humanité* had a daily issue of 250,000 copies with 350,000 on Sundays. In November, 1936, its figure passed 510,000 copies, and on special occasions reached 1,200,000.<sup>1</sup>

Even if we add to these lists forty-two regional weeklies, some of which, like *Enchaîné* of Lille and *Rouge Midi* of Marseilles, have several editions, the regional cell publications and those issued by the various factory cells, we shall still have only an incomplete idea of the Press penetration of Marxism in France.

Posters and pamphlets of all sorts contribute to this ideological propaganda of the Communist Party. This Party is really the soul of the repeated demonstrations of the Popular Front. On May 16, 1935, 500,000 men demonstrated in Paris under the red flag. On May 24 again there was a vast crowd of demonstrators—600,000 according to the *Petit Parisien*, and among them Léon Blum, the future Prime Minister—who marched for more than nine hours to the Mur des Fédérés, with wild-eyed men, women, and children singing the Carmagnole, the Internationale and other revolutionary songs. This immense crowd carried red flags, anti-religious inscriptions and streamers with such slogans as 'Soviets Everywhere,' 'For Bread, Peace, and Liberty,' and 'Against War and Fascism.'

The Communist Party decided to leave no stone unturned to give an electoral victory to the Popular Front, though it had no intention of taking part in a Government, but would support it and govern more effectively by itself 'through the masses.' This was the idea of the Soviet leaders as expressed by Dimitrov

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the *Bulletin Quotidien*, November 10, 1936, p. A 7.



at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern :<sup>1</sup> ' If the anti-Fascist movement resulted in the creation of a government which would make a real war on Fascism and apply a Popular Front programme, Communists, while remaining the irreconcilable enemies of all bourgeois governments and advocates of all power to the Soviets, would nevertheless support such a government.'

## *II. Popular Front success at the Polls.*

The success of the Popular Front at the elections of April 26 and May 3 was a triumph for the French Communist Party, exceeding all its hopes. It is true that this was partly due to the fidelity with which the orders given on April 27 by the Executive of the Socialist and Republican Union, and on April 29 by Communist, Socialist, and Radical-Socialist Parties were carried out. Wherever the votes of Left Wing electors were divided between candidates from various constituent parts of the alliance, they united on the second vote for the candidate who headed the list on the first occasion. Thanks to these tactics, which were rendered possible only by the formation of the Popular Front, the Communists advanced from 10 seats to 72, the Socialists from 129 at the time of the 1932 elections, to 146, while the Radicals dropped from 157 to 106.

On June 5, in a broadcast address, M. Léon Blum, the new Prime Minister, formally declared the Popular Front Government constituted with a Popular Front programme. Now this programme, which is a clever mixture of dangerous measures of Muscovite inspiration and legitimate claims calculated to satisfy democratic aspirations, made no allusion to the ultimate aim of the Communist Party. It was necessary to assuage

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, September 6, 1935.

the fears which might be aroused among some of the organizations in the great 'anti-Fascist' alliance. At the Eighth National Congress of the French Section of the Communist International, at Villeurbanne, from January 22 to 25, 1936, M. Thorez was not under the same necessity of concealing his Party's game. He was almost brutal in his language, declaring, without any camouflage, that 'the Popular Front Government will be a Government providing all possibilities for agitation and for propaganda, aiming at the organization of the working class and of the Communist Party for action, a Government paving the way for the seizure of complete power by the working class. In short, this Government is the prelude to an armed rising for the dictatorship of the proletariat.'<sup>1</sup>

### *III. Dimitrov's Instructions for Bolshevizing France.*

The instructions given by Dimitrov at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern on August 2, 1935, had no other object than the systematic preparation for the accession of the Soviets to power in France. This is what the General Secretary of the Third International recommended :<sup>2</sup>

'(1) Secure the establishment of a Single Front not only in the political field, but also in the economic, in order to organize the struggle against the Capitalist offensive and also to break the resistance opposed to a Single Front by the reformist C.G.T.

'(2) Bring about Trades Union unity in France : single unions on the basis of the class struggle.

'(3) Attract to the anti-Fascist movement the masses of the peasants and small middle-class people, giving

<sup>1</sup> M. Thorez : *L'Union de la Nation Française* (Paris, Publications Révolutionnaires, 1936), p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> G. Dimitrov ; Report presented on August 2, 1935, to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International ' Pour Vaincre le Fascisme,' p. 79.

their everyday needs a special place in the programme of the anti-Fascist Popular Front.

'(4) Consolidate the anti-Fascist movement from the point of view of organization and extend its scope by the general establishment of elected organizations outside the anti-Fascist Popular Front, so as to influence a larger body of people than can be reached by the existing Parties and workers' organizations.

'(5) Press for the dissolution and disarmament of the Fascist organizations as seditious bodies directed against the republic and as agents of Hitler in France.

'(6) Purge the State services, the Army and Police of the conspirators who are preparing a Fascist *coup d'état*.

'(7) Organize a struggle against the leaders of the reactionary cliques in the Catholic Church, one of the principal bulwarks of French Fascism.

'(8) Link the Army to the anti-Fascist movement by setting up within its ranks committees of defence of the Republic and Constitution to resist those who wish to make use of the Army for an anti-constitutional *coup*. Do not allow the reactionary forces to break the Franco-Soviet pact which defends the cause of peace against the menace of German Fascism.'

Each of these points is either already realized or on the way to realization. At the proper moment revolutionary strikes took place in Paris, in the Red suburbs and in the provinces. In the general dislocation caused by the occupation of workshops and the weakness of the authorities the Communists seek their opportunity to capture the machinery of government. Already on June 12, 1936, while strikes and occupations of factories were general in France, a skilful plot was drawn up to seize power for the Soviets. Discouraging reports, however, were sent to Moscow by several members of

the Third International, who said that the Army was not yet sufficiently sympathetic and the country-side was still hostile. The orders were therefore countermanded and the plot was called off.<sup>1</sup> It is only an adjournment, however, and if one day the attempt succeeds, it follows from the Muscovite dogmas that the establishment of Communism in power will be also the establishment of the anti-religion. From the moment the dictatorship of the proletariat is proclaimed a relentless war will be waged against the whole of Capitalist society, against Catholicism, and indeed against all religion, considered as an integral part of the traditional social order.

Capitalist society, priests, religious orders, simple believers, Christians, and believers of all sorts will be 'liquidated.' It would be an illusion to suppose that Soviet Communism is simply 'the application of Marxism to the special conditions of Russia.'<sup>2</sup> Both in its theoretical objects and in the painful reality of the facts, it goes far beyond the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. As Stalin has said :<sup>3</sup> 'It is not simply a Russian, but an international phenomenon.' Because of its universal character, Soviet Communism is the same thing in Russia, Mexico, France, and Spain, but what gives it a different appearance according to whether it is applied by Russians, Mexicans, Frenchmen, or Spaniards is that in the U.S.S.R. it is in power, while in the other countries it has not yet secured mastery of the government machinery. As long as they are not in power the disciples of Marx are able to vary their tactics and are indeed required to do so by the strictest tenets of Leninism, in order to adapt themselves to concrete situations and exploit them to greater advantage as

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jacques Bardoux in the *Revue de Paris*, August 15, 1936, pp. 721 to 841.

<sup>2</sup> Stalin : *Le Léninisme Théorique et Pratique* (Paris, Bureaux d'Éditions communistes, 1933), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., loc. cit.

foreseen by Lenin. Once masters of the situation, however, they have to apply Marx-Leninism under pain of being turned out of the Party as heretics. Communist theory, we must never forget, is essentially linked to practice.

## CHAPTER IV

### FRANCE IN 1935 AND 1936

Tactics of the outstretched hand—Dangerous associations—The Communist trap.

‘Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravening wolves.’ (Matthew vii, 15.)

#### *I. The Outstretched Hand.*

TO obtain the victory, the followers of Moscow wish to gain as many supporters as possible, even among Catholics. With this object, according to the advice given by Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Third International, ‘the Communist Youth Federations should work by all methods for the unification of all the non-Fascist mass organizations of young people.’

At the end of 1934, when the idea of a great anti-Fascist Popular Front took first place in the Communist mind, there was a change in the tactics of the Party in France. In order to attract the Catholics, they staged the comedy of liberalism, holding out their hands to Catholics and to Christians generally. This is the policy especially of those who aim at winning over Christian youth to Bolshevik atheism.

‘For some months,’ wrote *Echos du G.E.S.*<sup>1</sup> in April, 1935, ‘we have noticed in various quarters that Socialists and Communists are attempting to draw members of our Catholic societies into their organizations. One might imagine that these are isolated facts

<sup>1</sup> *Echos du G.E.S.* (Groupement d’entr’aide sacerdotale), April, 1935, pp. 5 and 6.

arising from a spontaneous goodwill, but there is evidence which entitles us to say that these tactics are the result of a general order given to all the groups. Here is the summary of a conversation overheard a few weeks ago in a Communist circle, of which we can guarantee the genuineness :

‘ “General principles for immediate action : It is a mistake to try to permeate the Catholic organizations, for Marxist agents are soon discovered and the environment is unfavourable. We must attract Catholics into Socialist surroundings where, on the contrary, the atmosphere will be favourable to them. As they will never agree to enter frankly Socialist or Communist circles, they must be attracted to organizations which are not officially Marxian, but simply Trades Union or pacifist, such as the Unions, the Red Aid, unemployment relief, conscientious objectors and anti-Fascist Leagues. Do not try to meet the Catholics with arguments, for they are generally very well schooled by their study circles, and, in any case, can find priests to refute the arguments. ‘ They must be won through sentiment.’ In other words, they must be made to hate ‘ Fascism,’ regarded primarily as the Italian, and, above all, the German regime which persecutes Catholics. Their hatred must be extended to the ‘ Leagues,’ which are nationalist and corporative in the sense of Hitler and Mussolini. Finally, they must be led to see that all that is not Marxian is a reaction of capitalism in decay. Act so that these ideas come spontaneously from the Catholics themselves.” ’

Here, taken again from the *Echos du G. E. S.*,<sup>1</sup> are some concrete examples indicating the new Communist tactics for winning over Christian youth to Marxian doctrines :

‘ In the school, the office or the factory, during the conversations in free intervals, take note of those who show a pacifist tendency and a contempt for the

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit.

"Fascist Leagues." A beginning can be made with these by showing that one is not anti-Catholic and admires what there is of greatness and nobility in religion, etc. Then talk of the Fascist regime which persecutes Catholics and workers, arouse their interest in the comrades who in all countries are suffering and struggling to free the working class from Fascism and war. Gradually pass from the general question of Fascism to that of the "National Leagues" and create a real hatred of "armed bands." They should be taken more and more often to anti-Fascist meetings, so that they find themselves more frequently in a Socialist than in a Catholic atmosphere and lose taste for Catholic activities. It will then be found that each reflection made on their Socialist and Communist friends will arouse increasingly violent reactions, all the more violent for being emotional in their origin and not needing rational arguments. When sufficient progress has been made with this first class of Catholics, they may be used to draw the others.'

Leninism is an infinitely adaptable doctrine, and these new tactics, apparently so remote from Marxian doctrine and objects, are simply a means to ignite more surely the flame of world revolution.

This is how M. Jacques Duclos, a Communist deputy, presented this idea to the Eighth National Congress of the Party at Villeurbanne from January 22 to 25, 1936: 'All young Communists should stretch out their hands to the young Christians, taking care not to shock their religious convictions.'

At this same Villeurbanne Congress, M. Granjon explained very clearly that it was necessary to take young people as they are in order to make Communists of them. 'We must bring about this union in taking the young people as we find them. . . . It is for you members of the Party to direct youth in the spirit of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.'



M. Maurice Thorez was equally explicit in talking to men of all classes. 'We stretch out our hand to you, Catholic workman, employee, artisan, or peasant, we who are secularists because you are our brother and the same cares weigh upon you as upon us. We offer you our hand, national volunteer, ex-soldier, now enrolled in the Croix de Feu, because you are one of our people and you suffer with us from the prevailing disorder and corruption.'

These words, spoken from Radio-Paris on April 18, 1936, were not without their effect. A month later, on May 14, M. Maurice Thorez declared explicitly in a speech to Paris Communists :<sup>1</sup> 'Judging by the number of letters which have come from Catholics, our appeal has been heard. We have already begun to co-operate in works of solidarity and fraternity, we are working side by side on unemployment relief committees.'

This explains the insistence of the Holy Father. On May 12, 1936, Pius XI<sup>2</sup> once more uttered a warning against 'the Communist peril, which is now really universal in its scope. This extension is all the more dangerous when it takes less violent and apparently less impious methods of gaining admission to the less accessible circles and to secure, as it has effectively done, incredible connivances, or at least silence and toleration, which are of inestimable advantage to the cause of evil.'

## *II. Dangerous Associations.*

But this warning does not seem to have been sufficiently understood, particularly by 'a journal which claims the honour of being Catholic.' A few days later, on May 31, Pius XI in an audience granted to representatives of Catholic Action all over the world, denounced once more those Christians who attempt in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Humanité*, May 17, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *Osservatore Romano*, May 13, 1936.

the doctrinal sphere to establish relations between Catholicism on the one hand and Communism on the other.<sup>1</sup> 'There are not wanting indeed even among Catholics, false leaders and false prophets, who, for various reasons and, as they are accustomed to say, for good objects, do some bad things and pave the way for still worse ones, by making a compromise between truth and error, sanctity and sin, the principles of the age and the laws of God, between the true and only Christianity which Christ himself taught and for which he gave his life, and another pseudo-Christian religion.'

The matter was not to rest there. If the journal which made the mistake submitted and recognized that even in the economic and social sphere no compromise is possible between the doctrine of Jesus and that of Marx, dangerous illusions nevertheless continued to flourish in the minds of more than one Catholic. The danger, far from being confined to a restricted area, made disquieting progress in certain circles. The confusion of ideas resulting from the present unsettlement revealed itself not only in the heat of discussions, but in the written word. A periodical entitled *Terre Nouvelle*, which described itself as the organ of 'revolutionary Christians,' maintained the possibility of alliance between Christianity and Marxism. Evidently the statement issued by the Vigilance Committee of the Arch-Diocese of Paris, published in *La Semaine Religieuse* of February 15, 1936, warning the faithful once more against *Terre Nouvelle*, 'which absolutely could not be regarded as a Catholic publication,' was not enough. Thus five months later, on July 23, a decree of the Holy Office placed this periodical, which had remained deaf to the repeated warnings of the Church through its ordinary *magisterium*, on the Index. 'On this occasion,' said the same decree, 'the faithful are warned against all books, newspapers, periodicals,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Osservatore Romano*, June 1, 1936.

and other writings which propose insidiously—and above all under the pretext of friendly co-operation in works of charity—the co-operation of Catholics with partisans of Communism.’

Thus the doctrine of the Church is declared with increasing clearness and we must conclude from this decree of the Holy Office that in future, even in works of charity, the co-operation of Catholics, not only with Communists, but with their partisans, is contrary to pontifical orders.

### *III. The Communist Trap.*

On September 14, 1936, in an audience given to five hundred Spanish priests, religious, and laymen, headed by the Bishops of Vich, Urgel, Tortosa, and Carthagená, Pius XI once more stigmatized ‘the subversive propaganda’ which surrounds and upsets the whole world. It is true that in this address the Holy Father did not deal exclusively with Communism—the neo-paganism propagated beyond the Rhine was not spared—but at several points the pontifical words were clearly applied to Marxist doctrine in the present day, and to the injurious effects of its diffusion in contemporary society.

‘It is not superfluous,’ said Pius XI, ‘on the contrary it is even timely and supremely necessary and has become a duty to us, to warn everybody against the trap by which the heralds of subversive forces are trying to create possibilities of co-operation with Catholics. They seek to do this by drawing a distinction between ideology and action, between the economic order and the moral.’

The leaders of the Communist Party are so anxious to win as many Christians as possible to their ideas that nothing seems to discourage them, neither the warnings given by Pius XI to Catholics nor the reaction of the latter. The orders of M. Thorez are very clear: ‘In

spite of the prohibitions and attacks of Pope and Cardinals, we shall continue to stretch out the hand to our brethren the Catholic workers.' This declaration of the General Secretary of the Communist Party was warmly applauded on October 30, 1936, at the close of his speech in the great hall of the *Mutualité*.

In an official organ of the Comintern, the *Correspondance Internationale*, of October 31, 1936, the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party, in its desire to win the mass of Catholic workers, went so far as to say : ' An absolute respect for the religious opinions of the masses is a matter of principle with Communists. . . . The Communists are the most sincere defenders of the family and of youth. . . . In the Soviet Union, where the regime desired by Communists exists, the family is protected, respected, transformed, and youth is liberated from the domination of corruption.'

Some feeble souls are shaken by these fallacious declarations, in flagrant contradiction of the true principles of Communist practice. These are they who fall into the trap laid for them by ' the heralds of subversive forces ' against whom Pius XI considered it ' a duty to warn everybody.' It is impossible to over-emphasize the truth of the statement in the Encyclical ' *Divini Redemptoris*,' published by Pius XI on March 19, 1937, solemnly condemning, once more, atheistic Communism, which is declared to be ' intrinsically perverted. We cannot admit collaboration with it in any sphere by whoever desires to save Christian civilization.' In the words of the Encyclical ' *Quadragesimo Anno* ' : ' Religious Socialism, Christian Socialism, are expressions implying a contradiction in terms ; no one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist.'

## CHAPTER V

### SPAIN IN 1936

Social and religious causes of the revolution—Moscow and the revolution in the Asturias (October, 1934)—Marxist ideological propaganda—Formation of the Frente Popular—Its electoral triumph (February 16, 1936)—Its anti-religious character—The Frente Popular during the Civil War: application of Moscow anti-religious methods—The myth of the citadel-churches—Attitude of the Basque Nationalists—Religious enthusiasm of the *Requetès* of Pampeluna and the populations of Navarre.

' These tragic happenings in Spain speak to Europe and the whole world, and proclaim, once more, to what extent the very foundations of all order, of all culture, of all civilization are being menaced.' (Pius XI to the Spanish refugees, September 14, 1936.)

AMONG the deep-seated and remote causes of the Spanish civil war, it is impossible not to include the deplorable social condition of a certain number of provinces, such as Andalusia and Estramadura. Side by side with the great landed properties of families who were sometimes forgetful of the obligations which attached to their rights, there were the unhealthy houses of the poor in the great towns and still more in the country. Unemployment and bad wages were not calculated to strengthen the resistance of the working masses to the promises of Soviet Communism. And to these social defects must be added religious. The pagan superstition which was sometimes blended with the popular Christianity and the attitude of some members of the clergy, who might well have turned aside from politics to assist in the spiritual and material uplifting of the workers, both help to explain the

revolt of the people against those who were represented to them by the revolutionary leaders as the enemies of all social progress. These causes in no way reduce the responsibility of Moscow, whose influence in Spain in 1935 and still more in 1936, is indisputable. Long before the advent of the Popular Front to power, many of the working-class populations pictured to themselves the U.S.S.R. as the earthly paradise. Cries of 'Long live Lenin,' 'Long live Stalin,' 'Long live the world Revolution,' and 'Soviets everywhere,' could be heard at the meetings of the extreme Left.

In October, 1934, the revolution in the Asturias failed, in spite of the efforts of the Spanish Socialist Party, vigorously supported by the emissaries of the Comintern, but the anti-religious character of the Asturian revolutionaries was apparent from the beginning. Canons, parish priests, members of the religious orders, and seminarists were assassinated; twenty churches were burned down. In a public park in Oviedo a priest was burned alive. In the same town the Cathedral and the Episcopal Palace were badly battered. From about this time, the Soviet agitators were observed to be at the head of the movement. A visitor to the Asturias<sup>1</sup> who inquired of the inhabitants who was leading the revolution there, was told: 'Themselves and them—*los rusos*' (the Russians). 'It is they who have prepared and organized everything. They hide from the people and go out only by night.'

Meanwhile this revolution, stifled before it could spread to the rest of the country, was only the prelude to a Moscow offensive directed to the general triumph of the anti-religion in Spain. From the opening months of 1935, the plans of the Comintern were systematically applied, a great 'Popular Anti-Fascist Front' being formed and developed. Its growing strength found expression in an increasing number of demonstrations.

<sup>1</sup> André Corthis in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 15, 1936.

One of these was held in Madrid on October 20, 1935, and, according to the Soviet Press, it was attended by 400,000 people. A huge Communist inscription: 'Fascism shall not pass!' dominated the scene. Other banners bore gigantic portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. For two and a half hours, Azaña attacked the existing government and what Moscow calls 'the clerico-Fascist reaction.' This and similar great 'anti-Fascist' demonstrations give some idea of the revolutionary Spanish elements after the 1933 general election. All that time the Communist Party had only 20,000 members, which is not much, but more than enough to make a revolution with the assistance of other organizations of the extreme Left. Moreover, the Party continued to grow.

In October, 1934, the revolutionaries, composed mainly of the extremists in the Socialist Party, were not successful either in the Asturias or in Catalonia, but, enlightened by their defeat and true to the instructions of the Comintern, the Socialists, and still more the Communists, recognized the need to invoke the formula of 'working-class unity' against 'Fascism.' The Marxist revolt failed in October, 1934, but the *Frente Popular* was to triumph at the elections of February, 1936.

At the end of 1934, the Communists, Socialists, and Anarchists began a vigorous ideological campaign which was soon outside the law. The *Mundo Obrero*, central organ of the Communist Party, continued in existence under the title of *Bandera Roja*. 'The drive soon became so strong,' we read in *Lettres de Rome*,<sup>1</sup> 'that the government had to submit. In the closing months of 1935 and the opening ones of 1936, there was a full tide of subversive and essentially anti-clerical press propaganda. . . . It swamped the towns and the villages. One hundred and forty-six journals can

<sup>1</sup> September-October, 1936, p. 170.

be traced as having been published about this time. There was an equally feverish activity in the schools and in the streets. At every point the Catholic Action workers found themselves confronted with tireless Communist propagandists, who, with a devotion worthy of a better cause, mingled with Catholics as they left the factories and the schools to try to convince them.'

On January 15, 1936, after this extensive preparatory propaganda, the Spanish Left issued a manifesto, signed on behalf of the Communists, the Syndicalist Party, the Workers' Party of Marxian Unity (P.O.U.M.), the Republican Left, Republican Union, and the Socialist Party, which also represented the General Union of Workers (U.G.T.), and the National Federation of Socialist Youth.

The formula of all these parties was substantially the same as that of the Popular Front, which had already been set up in France. Each party retained its specific doctrine, but they were united for a common political programme. Thus the *Frente Popular* was formed. The elections of February 16 were a triumph and two facts made it particularly striking. Without being included in the Popular Front, nearly all the members of the following organizations decided at the last moment to support it with their votes: the National Confederation of Labour (C.N.T.), Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.), and a large part of the middle-class freemasons. To this unexpected help must be added the illegalities committed by the Left. With the help of the police, they seized the ballot papers at Pontevedra, Lugo, Carceres, Cordova, and Seville and altered them in their own favour. Having thus secured a parliamentary majority, they made prompt use of it by a complete or partial annulment of the elections at Granada, Cuenca, Salamanca, and Burgos. Gil Robles has exposed these methods, by which the



Government now established at Valencia was rendered illegal from the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

On July 19, the same organizations which had rallied at the last moment to the *Frente Popular* were to take up arms with the Government against the Nationalists. In the general upset of the first days of the civil war the Basque Catholics, influenced by the hope of gaining political independence, also joined the Popular Front. Although the Communist Party at this time had only fifteen deputies out of 472 it became more and more the life and soul of the Anti-Fascist movement.

The anti-religious character of the Spanish Popular Front became clearly apparent on its accession to power on February 16, 1936, and the Spanish Freemasons declared themselves 'fully, totally and absolutely' in favour of it.<sup>2</sup> The Government closed, or at least secularized, all the confessional schools. The revolutionaries began to burn churches and religious houses. From February 16 to July 19, 1936, more than 347 fires or attempted fires of this kind were recorded.

Here are some facts, taken chiefly from the *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados*<sup>3</sup> of May 7, 1936, which reported the speech of Don Jose Calvo Sotelo. To avoid unnecessary details, we will confine ourselves to the period from April 1 to 15, 1936.

On April 3, at Alcoy, the church of St. Francis of Sales was burnt out; on the 5th at Cudon (Santander) the parish church was burned and destroyed, and at Muricie an attempt was made to burn down the church of St. Lawrence; on the 6th at Cuente Arce (Santander) the parish church was burned; on the 7th the chapel was burned at Palomar de Ribere de Arriba (Asturias); on the 8th the religious ornaments were burned at Aldea de Castro (Pontevedra) and the Martyrs' Sanc-

<sup>1</sup> *The Universe*, January 22, 1937, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *A.B.C.* (Madrid edition), October 20, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Bulletin E.I.A., No. 12, July, 1936.

tuary at Valeda-Laguna (Burgos) set on fire ; during the night of the 11th a fire was started at the church in Escucha (Teruel) ; the parish churches of Labiana and Lorio (Asturias) were added to the list on the 13th, and on the 15th ornaments taken from the church were burned in the streets at Jaraco (Valencia). Every day some sacrilegious arson or other profanation was added to the sorry tale.

This was three months before the beginning of the civil war, but already in the middle of April the situation was critical. Armed men stopped vehicles in the streets and, brandishing revolvers, demanded a toll on behalf of the International Red Aid, which is simply an international auxiliary of the Comintern. As in the October revolution of 1934, observers reported that the country was increasingly infested with professional agitators from Moscow. These joined the groups in the public squares and, still in the name of the International Red Aid, organized great popular meetings at which the Communist anti-religion was preached to souls already leavened with Marxism. So effective was this propaganda that, by the end of May, Jesus Hernandez, Minister for Education in the Caballero Government, was able to say :<sup>1</sup> 'The Communist Party is the driving force of the movement ; by its illegal activities it has fixed in the popular mind the idea that only the Single Front will enable the Spanish workers to defend their bread and their liberty.'

On July 13, 1936, Don Jose Calvo Sotelo, the monarchist leader, was murdered by the 15th police section, and this was the spark that was to fire the powder magazine. On the 17th the Government informed the officers of the Madrid Garrison that the Communists were to rise in the streets on the morrow. The Minister of the Interior demanded the resignation

<sup>1</sup> *Imprecorr*, June 1, 1936.

of three generals—Franco, Goded, and Mola. They revolted and on the same day the military rebellion broke out in Morocco under Franco's orders. That was the beginning of the civil war, which spread like wild-fire through Spain, from Seville to Pampeluna, and from Alicante to Salamanca. On July 19, all the Spanish garrisons, except that of Valencia, rose against the *Frente Popular* Government. By the 22nd the Government had control of the situation in various parts of the country, notably in the whole of Catalonia, in Madrid and its environs, as well as the Asturias and the Basque country. Two fronts faced each other, Government and rebels, or, in other words, the Popular Front and the Nationalists, whom the Communists like to call 'Fascists,' thus employing a word which they have strangely abused for some years.

With the beginning of the civil war, the anti-religious character of the *Frente Popular* was more apparent than ever. During the night of July 19–20, the first victims of the revolutionaries were massacred amid the burning of churches and convents, and on the following days the burnings and sacrilege increased. The Reds appeared to be intoxicated by a devilish hatred. If the cathedral was spared in Barcelona, it may be said that this was only because the Government building was too near to make it safe to burn it. All the other churches in the town, with three or four exceptions, were burned, to the number of about 150. That was not all. When the Episcopal Palace was pillaged, the revolutionaries found a list of houses with private chapels and all these altars were systematically destroyed. Priests were shot in the Catalonian capital and such of the laity as wore religious emblems were maltreated. Some of them, indeed, were imprisoned and shot. The same treatment was meted out by the Catalan revolutionaries to the inhabitants of the peaceful town of Vich, famous for their fidelity to the faith

of their fathers. All the priests who were unable to escape or to hide were remorselessly massacred, the laity outraged, and for some days nobody was permitted to go out without a red armlet. The Cathedral, with the famous paintings by Sert, was burned.

In governmental Spain, and particularly in Catalonia, armed bands displayed an anti-religious hatred which seemed to exceed that of the Godless in the U.S.S.R., even at the time when the fight against religion reached its climax there. More than 20,000 churches or chapels have been destroyed or wrecked. In December, 1936, besides eleven bishops, the number of priests put to death since the beginning of the civil war amounted to 50 per cent of the Spanish priesthood, who at the beginning of that year had numbered 33,500, not including the sixty bishops and archbishops and 20,640 members of religious orders. In nine of the dioceses the percentage was as high as eighty, and at Malaga it was ninety.<sup>1</sup> During the first days of the revolution a veritable priest-hunt was organized, especially in Barcelona, and the head of any priest was valued at a thousand pesetas. If he was particularly well known for his apostolate among the work-people, the revolutionaries were prepared to pay up to three thousand. The parish priests of the little villages, who had fled to the woods and mountains, were chased with dogs. These satanic pursuits were described by the Reds as 'rabbit coursing.' The unfortunate priests 'were dug out of their holes ferociously. Usually they were killed out of hand, for no other reason than their priestly office.'<sup>2</sup>

The revolutionaries were, in fact, trained in the Moscow school, and the orders of the Comintern were strictly followed. Here is one of many significant

<sup>1</sup> These statistics, supplied by the Spanish College in Rome, are based on 200 letters from bishops and priests and on the testimony of eight bishops and 180 priests who visited Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Lettres de Rome*, September-October, 1936, p. 172.

facts.<sup>1</sup> 'When a group of anarchists came to the Episcopal Palace of X to destroy it they told the priest who received them (*incognito* of course), that they had received orders to kill all the bishops, priests, and monks they met. They added that they were following a very carefully drawn-up plan given to them in Soviet Russia. "There," they said, "we were taught to hate Christ, and we have declared a war on Him without quarter. Don't expect us to show any respect for the crosses we find here. We want you to hate Christ too. Say: Death to the Christ!"

"No," he replied. "I can't do that."

"Our object," they declared, "is to make an end of religion, which is the foe of human liberty. . . . We are working for this in every country in the world. It has been uphill work in Spain, which is faithful to the Pope, but we shall get rid of the Pope too in time."'

It is true that the Reds now seek to justify their vandalism by the legend that 'in Barcelona . . . a church burned down was always a trap laid by the priest who fired from the pulpit or belfry on the militia.'<sup>2</sup>

The vagueness of this allegation should lead us to suspect it. In none of the lists given by the Communists and their sympathizers do we find the names of the parishes in which the priests are supposed to have fired, nor the name of a single priest said to have done so. As to the number of churches in which this sort of thing is supposed to have happened, the most varied stories are told by the critics of the Left.<sup>3</sup> Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the Spanish Bishops to the Bishops of the world on the Spanish war.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Esprit*, October 1, 1936, p. 3. This review, without being Communist, has unfortunately adopted this legend intended to discredit the Spanish clergy.

<sup>3</sup> On p. 47 of *Vu*, of August 26, 1936, M. G. Soria says: 'Churches are burned because the clergy have turned them into formidable citadels, with barbed wire and machine-guns.' According to M. Ventura Gassol, Catalan Minister of Education, 'the burning

on the same page of a single newspaper one finds flagrant contradictions as to the motives of the incendiarism. This would justify us in relegating this original and belated discovery of the citadel-churches from which the priests fired on the people to the realm of myth, but there are other reasons. It is stated by creditable witnesses that the charges made by the *Frente Popular* against the clergy of Barcelona are quite unfounded. Even supposing, however, that one or two members of that clergy had fired on the Reds at the beginning of the civil war—which is not proved—this would not excuse the murder of religious workers and the burning of hundreds of churches by Government supporters since July 19, 1936. Still less would it justify the 347 cases of arson or attempted arson of churches and convents organized by the revolutionaries between February 16 and July 19, 1936, i.e. in the five months before the hostilities began. Clearly then the explanation of the sacrilegious vandalism of the Reds must be sought elsewhere than in simple reprisals against priests who fired on the people.

. . . . .

The Basque Nationalists<sup>1</sup> are practically the only Catholics who have made common cause with the Government forces. Señor Gil Robles judges them very

of churches was the result of popular indignation at the fact that there was shooting from two of them.' It will be observed that these two assertions not only differ from each other, but are both very different from what we have quoted from *Esprit*. M. Gassol talks only of two churches, and M. G. Soria, in adopting the legend of the citadel-churches, does not say that priests fired on the Reds from the pulpit or belfry.

<sup>1</sup> Señor Jose Bergamin and Señor Orsorio y Gallardo have been represented even in some Catholic journals as great Catholics in the *Frente Popular*. As a matter of fact, Señor Bergamin is a free-thinker and as for Señor Orsorio y Gallardo, the Spanish Ambassador in Brussels, it is common knowledge in Spain that he has never been a practising Catholic. References to this subject will be found in *The Universe* of January 22, 1937, p. 9.

severely on this point. At the beginning of 1937, the former leader of the Spanish Catholics wrote :

‘ They are a living example of how separatist politics can smother all Christian spirit. The Basque separatists frequently maintained the thesis that they are “ born ” Basque, and only later, by baptism, do they become Christians, and hence the furtherance of Basque separatism must prevail over the interests of Christianity.

‘ Whoever doubts the truth of this statement of the Basque heresy has but to read the writings of the founder of Basque separatism, Sabino Arana Goiri.

‘ So it is that the Basque separatists, with Aguirre at their head, have made common cause with the Communists, church incendiaries, murderers of bishops, priests and religious, and profaners of those things that are sacred to religion.’<sup>1</sup>

This excessively severe condemnation does not appear quite to represent the position of Sabino Goiri, in spite of some verbal extravagances on the part of one who is not entirely free from a certain pseudo-mysticism. Moreover, it is fair to say that in spite of their *de facto* association with the Bilbao Reds, the Basque Nationalists have often been able to influence the Valencia Government and to restrain the anti-religious activities of the revolutionaries.

As long ago as August, 1936, the Bishops of Vittoria and Pampeluna made a clear and moving appeal to those unhappy Basques, of whom we may say that, in spite of everything, they are at heart deeply Christian.

‘ Dearly beloved children : with all the authority that belongs to us and with all the definiteness of a

<sup>1</sup> *The Universe*, January 22, 1937, p. 9.

commandment based on the clear and inescapable doctrine of the Church, we have to say to you : *non licet*.

‘It is not permissible, in any way, or in any sphere, and certainly not in the form of a cruel war—the ultimate method by which nations assert their will—to divide the Catholic forces in face of the common enemy. The doctrine of unity before the enemies of Christianity, before everything, above everything and in everything which the present Pope has so often proclaimed . . . should be applied unreservedly and without restriction in a war in which all is at stake—doctrine, ideals, property, and life, the present and future of a people.

‘It is less than ever permissible, rather is it absolutely forbidden, that, separating from one’s brethren, one should unite with the enemy to fight one’s brother, thus seeking to blend the ideal of Christ with that of Belial, for there can be no agreement between them.

‘What we have declared to be illicit borders on the monstrous when the enemy is that modern monster, Marxism or Communism, a seven-headed hydra, which is the compendium of all heresies and diametrically opposed to Christianity in its religious, political, social and economic doctrine. When the Sovereign Pontiff, in very recent documents, has anathematized Communism and warned all the Powers, even the non-Christian, against it as a battering-ram which would destroy every civilization worthy of the name, to lend a hand to Communism on the battlefield, and that in Spain and in the most Christian country of Viscaya and Navarre, can only be regarded as an aberration of minds full of illusions which have closed their eyes to the light of truth. . . .’



It would be impossible to speak more clearly, and yet the great majority of the Basque Nationalists have not responded to the appeal of the Bishops of Pampeluna and Vittoria. They justify their attitude by a letter said to have been sent by an Archbishop to a Canon—and they give both the names—in which it was said that in the circumstances the Basques are not bound in conscience to obey their Bishops. The same advice is said to have been given by a certain ecclesiastical personality, consulted by Señor Monzon, the Minister of the Interior, on the ground that the episcopal document was written under constraint.

The Basque Nationalists add another reason. They are convinced that the success of Franco would turn Catholicism into a State religion, and they hold that a church persecuted by the *Frente Popular*, against which the Spanish people would react, would be in better case than a church slavishly subject to a Fascist government.

Without accepting such arguments, it is fair to take them into account. They show the complexity of the problem and the difficulty of forming a final judgement at a time when passions are still heated by a civil war which threatens to involve the whole world in a conflict of ideals.

. . . . .

If the combatants for the *Frente Popular*, with the exception of the majority of the Basque Nationalists, are frankly anti-religious, there are on the other hand strong forces on Franco's side which are fighting to defend their religion. They have taken up arms in a real crusade. This religious character is especially shown in Navarre. In July, 1936, in the early days after the rising, when General Mola appealed for two thousand volunteers, the town of Pampeluna replied that it was ready to supply six thousand. But so

strong was the religious enthusiasm of these populations that, according to reliable testimony, twenty thousand *Requêtes* presented themselves on the first day. There were soon sixty thousand, and to-day eighty thousand fight against the *Frente Popular*. Their deeply Christian sentiments, even more than the Red Cross on their khaki uniforms, unite them with the Old Crusaders. Most of these men, young and old, proudly wear on their breasts the image of the Sacred Heart, of Our Lady of Pilar, or of St. James of Compostella. Many of them aim above all else at the victory in their country of the cause of Christ the King. Since the beginning of the civil war, in the districts held by the Nationalists, and especially in Navarre, the people have restored the crucifix in the schools, and organized public prayers and processions for the victory of the Whites. It is true that, within the ranks of the Nationalist troops, side by side with the *Requêtes*, the *Phalangists* are becoming increasingly numerous. These are the Spanish Fascists.

Founded in October 29, 1933, by the late lamented José Antonio Primo de Rivera, one of the finest figures in young Spain, the Spanish Phalanx had grown remarkably since February 16, 1936. On that historic election day it polled only three thousand votes. To-day there are 150,000 *Phalangists* on the National front.

These regiments of Spanish Fascists are composed of very dissimilar elements. Among their recruits are former Communists or Anarchists, who wish to atone for 'opinions and actions which have nothing in common with the ideas treasured in Nationalist Spain.'<sup>1</sup>

In short, a considerable part of Franco's troops,<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Victor Montserrat: *La Phalange Espagnole* in *La Croix*, December 30, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Several journals quoting an article signed with three asterisks in the *Revue de Paris* on October 1, 1936, have declared that certain of the Nationalist leaders are freemasons. Here is the testimony of a priest in touch with the Nationalist army, which was published in

especially the *Requetés*, fight to save Christian civilization in the Iberian Peninsula. Side by side with this large number of profoundly Christian soldiers there are among the *Phalangists* some who are inspired by the Fascist doctrine with its tendency to worship the State. They are nevertheless fighting for the good cause, since they are helping to save Spain from the Communist anti-religion.

With these qualifications and setting aside the Basque Nationalists, we may agree with Cardinal Goma, Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, when he says :<sup>1</sup> ' At bottom this is a war between love and hatred of religion. Even if we admit a mixture of less spiritual motives, it was the love of the God of our fathers that led half Spain to take up arms and hatred that rallied the other half against God. On the one side we have camps transformed into temples by religious fervour and a sense of divine Providence ; on the other, thousands of priests murdered, churches destroyed, and a satanic fury against everything religious.'

the *Catholic Herald* on December 4, 1936, and, in a French translation, in *France Catholique* of December 12, 1936 : ' I should very much like to see any proof of the accusation that General Mola is affiliated to the Spanish Lodge. Throughout the Republican regime the general, against his own interests, has led an implacable and merciless campaign against Freemasonry. As regards General Queipo de Llano, it used to be affirmed, though no proof was ever given, that for reasons of colonial politics he was a member of the Lodge at Tetuan. It would be interesting to have the question thrashed out. I can myself affirm that during the three months which I have lived with the Nationalists, I have seen that the army is penetrated by a profoundly religious spirit. The leaders, Franco, Davila, Yuste, Varela, etc., are excellent Christians, all of whom have truly edified me.'

<sup>1</sup> Open Letter addressed in January, 1937, by Cardinal Goma, to Señor Aguirre, president of the Basque Separatists.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OUTLOOK : DANGERS AND REMEDIES

A threat for the future—Christian renovation the only effective remedy.

‘Omnia instaurare in Christo.’ (‘To establish all things in Christ’) Ephesians 1, 10.

#### *I. A Threat for the Future.*

THE complicity of certain Capitalist nations with the Government of the Soviet Republics, and, even among Catholics, ‘the incredible connivance, or at least, silence and toleration, which are of inestimable value to the cause of evil,’ help the progress of Communism in the countries in which its propaganda is permitted and become a serious threat for the future. The fact is that, to carry out the doctrine of Marx, the proletariat, when it has seized power in one country, must spread the flame of revolution everywhere else, for—in Lenin’s own words<sup>1</sup>—‘the task of the victorious revolution is to do the utmost in one country for the developement, support, and awakening of the revolution in the others.’

Stalin has not abandoned the Leninist principle. A few years ago he proclaimed in almost identical terms in an address to the University of Moscow: ‘Revolution, victorious in one country, has for its essential task to develop and support the revolution in the others. Thus, it should not regard itself as an independent

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Stalin, *op. cit.*, pp. 27 and 28.

power, but as an auxiliary, a means of accelerating the victory of the proletariat in other lands.'

Again :<sup>1</sup> ' We must consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country in order to overthrow imperialism in all the others. Revolution is no longer limited to a single country ; it has entered on its world-wide phase.' At the Seventh Congress of the Communist International at Moscow in the summer of 1935, Stalin was able to claim the honour of being the leader of the world revolution.

Whether the Soviet Government, the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern, these three organizations that form a single moral unit, proclaim their plan openly or carefully hide it, their final object remains the same : throughout the whole world they wish to ensure the triumph of atheist materialism by the ' violent overthrow of the whole traditional social order.'<sup>2</sup>

So universal a task might appear chimerical if we did not know how it is facilitated by the close link between the Executive Committee of the Third International in Moscow and the various branches spread over all the world—the Communist parties in other lands, auxiliary organizations like the Young Communist International, the Women's Red International, the Red Sports International, the international groups of Red service-men, the V.O.K.S. or Society for Cultural Relations with Foreigners, the Educational Workers' International, the Proletarian Freethinkers' International, the International Red Aid, the Red Trades Union International, and so on. These Communist organizations are now reinforced by their alliance with parties belonging to the Second International in the Single Front, and by the constitution of the Popular Front. Thus a whole atheist world is mobilized against Christian civilization.

<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Programme of the Communist International, 1935.

The speeches at the Seventh Congress show that the Comintern is far from having abandoned its propaganda outside the U.S.S.R.<sup>1</sup> and, lest there should be any doubt about it, an authoritative organ of Communism in France is careful to warn us that 'those who nurse the ridiculous hope of goodness knows what evolution of the Third International must abandon it.'

The progress of materialist Communism, totally inconsistent with Christianity, its subtle tactics for deceiving the masses and winning them over to the Marxist anti-religion ought not to leave us indifferent. There is too much solidarity even amongst the nations farthest removed from each other to-day for indifference to be other than complicity with the progress of the anti-religion. Is not the cause of God basely betrayed by its friends in this way while it is furiously attacked by its enemies?

It is true that German Fascism and Japanese imperialism have just united in a crusade against the Third International, but a crusade carried on by those who are themselves tainted with the neo-paganism so often denounced by Rome could only result in substituting a worship of the State for the anti-religious cult. It is the reign of the Cross that we want, not that of the Swastika.

It is equally true that the three great Christian bodies are impressed by the progress of militant atheism, and their leaders have several times protested.<sup>2</sup> In each of them there have been some who have recognized the need to unite in order to call attention to the evil and to supply the remedy. The recognition of this need has brought into existence the International Christian Crusade, founded in Canada in 1928, the Christian Protest Movement, founded in London

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the *Internationale Communiste*, special number, September 17 and 18, 1935, and *Documentation de l'Entente Internationale contre la troisième Internationale*, September-October, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> A list of the principal papal protests will be found at the end.

in December, 1929, the International Commission 'Pro Deo,' established in Geneva in 1933, the review *Unitas*, of which the first number appeared in October, 1934, and *Lettres de Rome*, first published in 1935.

But how can these efforts suffice to stay the progress of the anti-religion even in Western Europe? Unless they are backed up by a Christian renovation aiming at a better understanding of social justice and a larger charity towards the working masses, it is to be feared that they will be submerged by the rising tide of atheist Communism. The delusive hopes of proletarian Marxism are helped by the exploitation of suffering and injustice when the seeds of hatred are sown and the numbers of the Godless increased.

Lenin's disciples offer the world a 'new order.' Through the class war, they hope to bring about a violent revolution ending in the suppression of private property, the family, and religion. The 'new order' that they wish to establish is nothing but pure materialism, and would be only the precursor of new evils, for in a materialist world the individual is degraded, society corrupted, and the human mind, radically misunderstood, takes a terrible revenge. By denying spiritual values it brings about the reign of the worst perversions, the dawn of physical, moral, and even material ruin.

## *II. Christian Renovation the Only Effective Remedy.*

To this 'new order,' which holds the seeds of all disorders, degradation, and misery, the Christian world opposes a 'new order' which is the source of peace, joy, and spiritual and material wealth. By a fuller justice and more universal charity it works to unite the classes and tries to improve social conditions and create a better moral atmosphere. The highest spiritual authorities have invited us to devote ourselves without delay to the establishment of 'this new

order which calls out to all of us,' and is no less than an adaptation to our own day of the eternal principles of Christianity. Since the problem is more than an economic one and cannot be independent of Catholic morality, the social teaching of the Church and its *magisterium* provide the solution for present difficulties and contain the only remedies really capable of stilling the tempest which is now raging in the world.

In June, 1936, when in certain circles the ferment of Marxism was more active than ever, and the revolutionary strikes—first instalment of the armed rising<sup>1</sup>—were taking place even beyond the frontiers, the French bishops called attention once more to the practical consequences which issue from the social principles laid down by Leo XIII in 1891, and again by Pius XI in 1931.

On June 7, Cardinal Verdier issued a moving appeal in which he did not hesitate to repeat 'that the Church . . . has denounced the evils of the social order and recalled the world to what true justice and a wise equality demand for the good of the worker.' His Eminence added: 'If this teaching had been understood, many of the ills from which we suffer would have been avoided.'

The late Cardinal Binet, speaking on Catholic workers and present events, recalled that nobody is entitled to deny to the workers the right of combination. He repeated the teaching of Leo XIII, which has lost none of its actuality, according to which, among the organizations helpful to the workers, 'the first place belongs to the working-class corporations which will gradually include all the other activities.' Again: 'Things being as they are, Christian workers have to choose between two courses: to join societies from which religion has everything to fear, or to organize themselves and to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. speech by Pieck in July, 1935, at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.



unite their own forces in order to throw off an unjust and intolerable yoke. Can there be the least doubt in the mind of anyone who wishes to save the highest interests of humanity from a grave peril that the second of these two courses must be chosen ? '

Mgr Gonon, Bishop of Moulins, emphasized a teaching of St. Augustine which might have been written yesterday : ' While we hate the sin, let us love the sinner.' Catholics and Catholicism are not the same thing. The doctrine is excellent, but the men who profess it may not all be good, and the one fact does not invalidate the other. Similarly, Communists are not Communism. The latter is an evil and blameworthy doctrine, since it is anti-religious, but its adepts are often ignorant and unconscious of its real nature, men of good-will, generous and upright, some of whom have suffered and still suffer, to whom God, who is their Father as well as ours, commands us to advance certainly not with the raised fist, but with outstretched hands and open hearts in the hope of enlightening them by loving and praying for them.

This distinction between men and doctrines is not unreal, as some are inclined to think. It is so real and so important that the French Cardinals in their pastoral letter addressed to the ' Catholics of France,' on October 31, 1936, called attention to it in the most explicit terms : ' The great Pope Pius XI and your Bishops have already warned you several times against materialism, atheism, and the doctrines of violence and hatred that neo-paganism and Communism wish to establish among us. Alas ! by their fruits ye shall know them. We repeat : while we love all men, we cannot do other than reprove these doctrines and these attitudes so contrary to our faith and to our traditions, so opposed to the eternal principles which we believe to be the true foundation of individual, family, and national life.'

The faithful, generally true to the teaching of Jesus,

have echoed the voice of their pastors. On October 25, 1936, on the Feast of Christus Rex, 60,000 Alsatian Catholics demonstrated at Strasbourg 'for the defence of the threatened religious liberties and Christian civilization.' They promised to co-operate more actively than ever in the material, intellectual, and moral improvement of the working classes. Once more they declared their absolute and fundamental opposition to Marxism and Communism, while proclaiming their readiness to discharge their duty of justice and charity towards all men. Wounded in their deepest sentiments by the association of the national flag with the red flag, they declared for a France true to Christ and to her own best traditions, and repudiated Bolshevism.

A month earlier, on September 13, 1936, 40,000 of them had met in that same town of Strasbourg and passed a solemn resolution, in the name of hundreds of thousands of Alsatian Catholics, from which we may quote these lines :

'Recognizing the gravity of the moral, social, and economic crisis in modern society, the Catholics of Alsace pledge themselves to be true disciples of Christ, ready to reform their own lives according to the teaching of the Gospel, and to create a new world for the new times in accordance with the social teaching of the Church and in the spirit of Catholic action. To this end they will work to remedy the abuses of economic liberalism and to oppose to the errors of materialist Marxism the Christian ideal of true justice and social charity.'

At the same period, from September 10 to 14, the Sixth Malines Congress was held under the presidency of His Eminence, Cardinal van Roey, Primate of Belgium. The subject studied was 'Catholics and the New Age.' Belgian Catholics have the same problems as those in France and once more the universal desire

of the Christian world to build a new social order made itself felt. The need for prompt action inspired all the proceedings at Malines. 'Not museums or exhibitions, but a workshop to build a future!' Two hundred thousand demonstrators on Sunday, September 13, rallied to the aid of the Church, throwing out a life-line above the waves of a confused and clouded future.

Among the authoritative testimonies, a special value attaches to that of the Prime Minister, M. van Zeeland, when we remember the social and economic aid rendered to Belgium by the former Vice-Governor of the National Bank in one of the gravest crises the country has ever known.

'I do not know,' he said in his address on 'Catholics and their Civic Duties,' 'any doctrine which by its coherence, definiteness, and adaptability gets to such close grips with reality as that of the Encyclicals. ('*Rerum novarum*' and '*Quadragesimo anno*.') For myself, after a careful and detached study of the leading economic and social doctrines elaborated in the last century, I have reached the conclusion that none of them keeps abreast of the facts or is sufficiently broad to satisfy aspirations which, one after another, the nations experience to-day. I do not pretend that either in the Encyclicals or in the commentaries on them, you will find a literal solution of all our economic and social difficulties; far from it. What I am convinced of, however, is that if the general indications they contain are grafted on to the trunk of the Catholic verities, the Encyclicals give us the most reliable guide and the most coherent body of doctrine at present existing in the world.'

This public pronouncement by a contemporary statesman indicates the duty which rests upon the Christian *élite* of our day. In the Encyclicals we have the principles of a new social order, but when it comes

to questions of hours of labour, rates of wages, economic planning and similar questions, there are all sorts of practical applications which remain to be made. It is not only desirable, therefore, that the best minds among Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox should study and promulgate by tongue and pen the social doctrine of the Church, so widely misunderstood, but the Christian world expects from them that work of adaptation in which Catholicism has always furnished pioneers. The Marxians, it is true, are led by intellectuals, but they reject moral principles, and Christians, therefore, are assured of a moral superiority. This should help them to rebuild the city on the basis of respect both for rights and duties in economic, family, social, national, and international life. This should give them the final victory in the hard struggle to re-establish all things in Christ.



## APPENDIX A

### THE ALLEGED PERSECUTION OF SPANISH PROTESTANTS

IN the course of November, 1936, Red propagandists spread a report that supporters of the national movement had treated Spanish Protestants with unheard-of cruelty, that pastors and their families had been assassinated and Protestant chapels burnt down. Anglican circles were so moved by this news that Dr. Inge, former Dean of St. Paul's, felt constrained to write a letter to the *Spectator* in which he echoed some fantastic accusations which had appeared in the *Church of England Newspaper*. According to this account the evangelical pastor at Salamanca had been shot, and it was said that before he was assassinated his wife and two small children, one less than a year old, were killed before his eyes. At Valladolid, the pastor was said to have been imprisoned with his family from the beginning of the Civil War, and it was rumoured that the prison had been burnt down and the prisoners roasted. The pastor of Miajadas was declared to have been shot with his wife and the pastor of Saragossa condemned to death. The Catholic priests in this case were said to have gathered together to enjoy the spectacle of the execution, which was prevented only by the intervention of the Consul. Two Protestant pastors were reported assassinated at Granada, and the pastor at Cordova was threatened with death by a priest, who took the furniture from his school and had it removed in lorries, the pastor saving his life only by flight. At Xeres the schoolmistress, it was said, had been imprisoned because she was not a Catholic, and several Protestants had been put to death at Ibañero.

Such were the accusations, and the military headquarters

at Salamanca ordered a careful inquiry, of which the results were communicated to the Press. We quote from the text given in the *Journal de Genève* of Thursday, December 24, 1936 :

These are the results of the inquiry :

' The pastor at Salamanca, Señor Atiliano Coco, has not been assassinated ; he and his wife and family are in excellent health. A member of the Radical-Socialist Party, Señor Coco, left it on its dissolution and joined the Republican Union. He was a member of the League of the Rights of Man and of several secret societies. On an accusation of spreading false news about the national movement he was arrested on July 31, but has since been set at liberty.

' There are two pastors at Valladolid ; one—Mr. Willes—is English and the other—Señor Borobia Munoz—Spanish. Both are in good health, which disposes of the story that they and their families perished in the supposed prison fire in this town.

' The pastor of Miajadas has not been shot with his wife. This gentleman, Señor Linan Andueza, disappeared towards the middle of July, after working with members of the Popular Front, to which he is believed to belong. He went from Miajadas to Badajoz, where he lives at 5, Castillo Militar Street, with his wife, née Munoz.

' It is untrue that the pastor at Saragossa has been condemned to death and therefore entirely false that the Catholic clergy gathered to see the execution. This pastor, Señor Heras Benito, fearing that there would be reprisals for the criminal bombardment of the Basilica of Our Lady of Pilar (reprisals which, as a matter of fact, did not occur) asked leave from the civil government of the city to go to Jaca. He was provided with the means of doing so and is now living there in perfect health.

' At Granada, where two pastors are supposed to have been assassinated, there are several Protestant ministers. Among them is Señor S. Palomeque, who, in spite of his advanced ideas and relations with the Popular Front leaders, remains at liberty. He is at present at Tangier, where he arrived from Seville in August. Señor David

Chorin left for Gibraltar at the beginning of the Civil War. Señores Zamora Yeste and Fernandez Guzman still officiate at Granada, as does Señor Luis Gonzalez. Señor Iniguez Martelo, on the other hand, an active propagandist of Red revolution, was arrested and handed over to the military authorities. The very serious allegations against him having been proved, he was sentenced to death and executed on September 4. Señor Jose Garcia Fernandez, accused of propaganda on behalf of the Reds, was questioned but set at liberty after he had proved his innocence.

'The pastor at Cordova, Señor Garcia Marzo, left home with his wife with a safe-conduct for Seville and from there he went on to Tangier. His derelict chapel, closed by the military authorities, has not been attacked by anybody, certainly not by a Catholic priest.

'At Xeres, no Protestants have been interfered with. The pastor of Ibañerando is the one who went from Miajadas to Badajoz. It is entirely untrue that a pastor called Blanco has been killed at Cadiz.

'In Nationalist Spain, in contrast to the unhappy happenings in Red Spain, nobody has been persecuted, still less executed, for his or her religious ideas. We would call attention to the fact that this statement is supported by circumstantial details which can easily be verified, whereas the charges made against us abroad are usually vague. Inquiry shows that in Nationalist Spain, in spite of the difficulties of the present time, there is an atmosphere of broad tolerance. We have never condemned anybody for being a Protestant.'



## APPENDIX B

### PONTIFICAL DOCUMENTS ON COMMUNISM

- Encyclical ' Qui pluribus ' (November 9, 1846).  
Allocution ' Quibus quantisque ' (April 20, 1849).  
Encyclical ' Noscitis et nobiscum ' (December 8, 1849).  
Allocution ' Singulari Quadam ' (December 9, 1864).  
Encyclical ' Quanto conficiamur mærore ' (August 10, 1863).  
Encyclical ' Quanta Cure ' (December 8, 1868).  
Encyclical ' Quod Apostolici ' (December 28, 1881).  
Encyclical ' Diuturnum ' (December 28, 1881).  
Encyclical ' Rerum Novarum ' (May 16, 1891).  
Allocution ' Amplissimus Concessum ' (March 24, 1924).  
Consistorial allocution ' Nostis qua præcipue ' (December 18, 1924).  
Reply to Address from the Sacred College (December 24, 1927)—*Documentation Catholique*, Vol. 19, 1928, p. 19.  
Encyclical ' Misericordissimus Redemptor ' (May 8, 1928)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 19, 1928, p. 291.  
Sacred Congregation to Mgr Liénart (June 5, 1929)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 20, 1929, p. 395.  
Letter to Cardinal Pompili ' Si Commuovono ' (February 2, 1930)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 23, 1930, p. 878.  
Reply to Address from the Sacred College (Dec. 24, 1930)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 25, 1931, cols. 1435-1436.  
Encyclical ' Quadragesimo anno ' (May 15, 1931).

- Jocist (Christian Working-class Youth) Pilgrimage (December 24, 1931)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 26, 1931, col. 709.
- Reply to Address from Sacred College (December 24, 1931)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 27, 1932, col. 135.
- Encyclical 'Caritate Christi Compulsi' (May 3, 1932)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 27, 1932, cols. 1413-1417.
- Encyclical 'Acerba animi' (September 28, 1932)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 28, 1932, cols. 582, 583, 585.
- Consistorial allocution 'Iterum vos' (March 13, 1933)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 29, 1933, cols. 714-715.
- Encyclical 'Dilectissima nobis' (June 3, 1933)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 29, 1933, cols. 1541, 1542, 1545.
- Apostolic constitution 'Quod superiore anno' (April 2, 1934)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 31, 1934, col. 1184.
- Allocution of December 24, 1935—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 25, 1936.
- Reply to Address of Cardinals and Archbishops (April 2, 1936)—*La Croix*, April 15, 1936.
- Letter of Cardinal Pacelli to the Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops of France (April 2, 1936)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 35, 1936, col. 1478.
- Address to Priests by the Papal Legate, Cardinal Pacelli, at Lourdes (April 26, 1935)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 35, 1936, col. 1477.
- Address of Pius XI at Audience of Hungarian Pilgrims (May 11, 1936)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 35, 1936, col. 1479.
- Address of Pius XI at Opening Ceremony of International Exhibition of the Catholic Press (May 12, 1936)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 35, 1936, col. 1481.
- Address of Pius XI to representatives of Catholic Action from various countries (May 31, 1936)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 35, 1936, col. 1486.
- Address of Pius XI to Spanish Refugees (September 14, 1936)—*Doc. Cath.*, Vol. 36, 1936, cols. 453 and 455.